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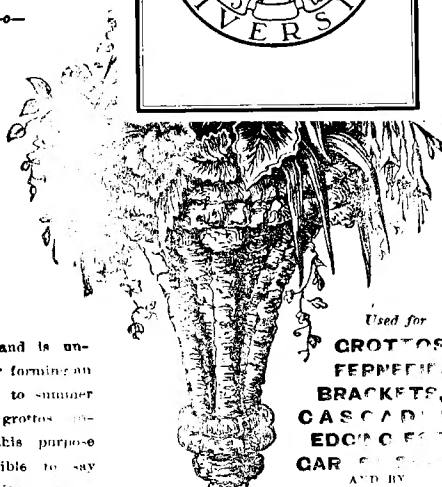
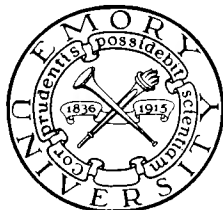
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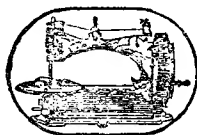
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THE STORY OF A PEASANT.



PART THE FIRST.

1789.

THE story of the Great Revolution of the people and the middle classes against the nobles in 1789 has been told by many. But they were men of wit and learning, who took an extended view of the matter. I am an old peasant, and I will only speak of these facts as they affected ourselves. Let us attend to our business; we must be acquainted with what occurred before our eyes; let us profit by them.

You must know, before the Revolution, the district and lordship of Phalsbourg had five villages belonging to it—Vilschberg, Mittelbronn, Lutzelsbourg, Hultenhäusen, and Hazelbourg. The townspeople and those of Vilschberg and Hazelbourg were free, but those of the other villages were serfs, men and women alike; they could not leave the lordship or otherwise absent themselves without the prévôt's permission.

The prévôt administered justice at the town-hall; he had both civil and criminal jurisdiction; he wore a sword, and could send a man to the gallows.

Accused persons were put to the torture in the vaults under the town-hall, where the guard-room now stands. If they refused to confess, the prévôt's sergeant and the executioner put them to such pain, that their cries could be heard on the open square.

The gallows were erected on market days under the old elms, and the hangman despatched them by resting his feet on their shoulders. In those days it required a stout heart to do wrong only in imagination. Phalsbourg had also a right to levy a toll on all commodities; for instance, every cart laden with cloth, wool, or similar wares paid a florin at the gates; every load of poles, planks, frames, or other woodwork, six gros de Lorraine; and rich stuffs, either velvets, silks, or cloths, paid thirty gros a waggon-load; one packhorse, two gros; one basket of goods, half a gros; a truckful of fish, half a florin; of butter, eggs, or cheese, six gros; every hogshead of salt, six gros; every rezal of rye or wheat, three gros; of barley or oats, two gros; one hundred pounds of iron paid two gros; a cow or an ox, six pfennings; a calf, pig, or sheep, two pfennings, &c.

In this wise the Phalsbourg people could neither eat, drink, nor clothe themselves without paying a round sum to the Dukes of Lorraine.

Then came the gabelle—that is, every hotel-keeper and tavern-keeper living in Phalsbourg or the villages belonging to it was obliged to pay his highness a certain tax on every measure of wine or beer which was either stored in their cellars or consumed by them. Then there were fines on alienation, which means five per cent. on the sale of houses or inherited property. Then came the tax on grain—every rezal of wheat, rye, barley, or oats sold in the market paid his highness one sou.

Then there were the standings at the fairs, that took place three times a year; the first, St. Matthew's day, the second, St. Modesty's, and the third, St. Gall's day. The sergeant put a price on these standings for the benefit of his highness.

Next, the town weights—every hundred pounds of wool, flour, or other goods paid one sou; then the fines, which were always disputed before the prévôt, but which his highness's counsellors usually decided in his favour; then the right to gather acorns, the right of pasture, of mowing, of felling; the great tithes, two-thirds for his highness, and one for the Church; the small tithes on wheat for the Church only, but which his highness finished by appropriating, loving himself better than the Church.

If any one wants to know how so many people found themselves in the clutches of his highness and his prévôts and bailiffs, they must remember that about 200 years before this miserable state of things, a certain George-John Count Palatine, Duke of Bavaria, and Count of Weldentz, who possessed immense forests in our country by the grace of the Emperors of Germany, but who profited nothing by them for want of inhabitants, want of roads to transport the wood, and of rivers to float it down to a market for it, published in Alsace, Lorraine, and the Palatinate, "That all those who were not afraid to work had but to betake themselves to these woods, that he would give them land, and they would live in abundance." That he, John of Weldentz, did all this for the glory of God! That Phalsbourg being on the high road between France, Lorraine, Vestrich, and Alsace, artisans, tradespeople, blacksmiths, coopers, and farriers, and shoemakers would find a market for their

productions, as would locksmiths, armourers, innkeepers, furniture-makers, and other industrious persons; that as the honour of God ought to be the beginning of every great undertaking, all those who found themselves in his good town of Phalsbourg should be free from servitude; they should be free to build, and should have wood for nothing! he would construct them a church wherein to preach purity, simplicity, and good faith; and a school to teach their children true religion, seeing that the mind of youth is a beautiful garden with delicious plants therein, the scent of which rises to God!

He promised them a thousand exemptions and advantages besides; the news soon spread over Germany, and crowds of people hurried to have a share in these good things.

They built, they cleared, they cultivated, and made the woods of George-John of some value, instead of being worthless.

Then did the said George-John, Count of Weldentz, sell lands, beasts, and inhabitants to Charles III., Duke of Lorraine, for the sum of 400,000 florins, in honour of good faith, justice, and the glory of God.

The greater number of the inhabitants were Lutherans. George-John had declared that faith, pure and simple according to St. Paul, should be preached at Phalsbourg, in virtue of the Confession of Augsburg; but as soon as he had pocketed the 400,000 florins, his promises never kept him awake, and the successor to Charles III., who had promised nothing at all, sent his trusty and well-beloved counsellor of state, Didier Dathel, to exhort his townsmen of Phalsbourg to embrace the Catholic faith; should any persist in their errors, to order them to

leave the town on pain of expulsion and loss of property. Some were after this fashion converted ; the rest, men, women, and children, left, taking their carts loaded with old furniture with them.

Order being thus established, the dukes employed "their dearly-beloved inhabitants of Phalsbourg in raising and repairing the ramparts ; in building the two gates of Germany and France of hewn stone ; in clearing out the ditches, building a town-hall for the administration of justice, a church for the instruction of the faithful, and a home for the curate adjoining the said new church, to watch over his flock ; last of all, to build the market-hall, where the dues were levied and paid." After which the officers of his highness settled what duties, charges, service, and forced labour, or *corvées*, they thought proper ; and so these poor people worked from father to son, from 1583 to 1789, for the benefit of the Dukes of Lorraine and the Kings of France, for having believed in the promises of George-John of Weldentz, who was only a rogue, like many others in this world.

The dukes also established several corporations in Phalsbourg by letters patent, associations among men of the same trade, to prevent all others from working at it, and consequently enabling themselves to plunder the public between them without let or hindrance.

The state of apprenticeship lasted three, four, or five years. The master was well paid for admission to the trade ; then after making his masterpiece and receiving his certificate, the quondam apprentice treated his neighbours as he had been treated himself.

The town was nothing like what it is now. The lines of streets and the stone-built houses are of course the

same, but not one house was painted ; all were in rough-cast ; the doors and windows were small and arched, and behind the leaden framework of the windows the tailor was to be seen sitting crosslegged on his board, cutting out or sewing, and the weaver at his loom throwing his shuttle in the obscurity.

The soldiers of the garrison, with their large cocked hats, their patched white coats hanging about their heels, were most wretched of all ; they were only fed once a day. The tavern-keepers and chop-house-keepers went from house to house collecting broken victuals for these poor devils ; this was still the case some few years before the Revolution.

The people themselves looked wan and dismal ; a dress was handed down from grandmother to granddaughter ; the grandfather's shoes were inherited by the grandson. No pavement in the streets, no lights at night, no gutters to the roofs ; small panes of glass in the windows, mostly replaced for twenty years by pieces of paper. In the midst of this squalor the prévôt passes and mounts the staircase of the town-hall, a black cap on his head ; young officers, nobles, march about in their little cocked hats and white uniforms, their swords against the calves of their legs ; capucins with their dirty beards, brown gowns, no shirts, and red noses, trooping to the convent, where now the college stands. I see all in my mind's eye as if it were yesterday, and I say to myself, " What happiness for wretches like us that the Revolution happened, and most of all for the peasantry !" For if the misery and want in the town were great, in the country they exceeded all description. In the first place the peasants paid the same dues as the townsfolk, with many others besides. In

every village in Lorraine there was a farm belonging to the seigneur or to a convent; all the best land belonged to this farm; the poor had only the worst as their share. Nor were the unfortunate peasants allowed to cultivate their land as they wished; grass land must remain grass land, arable land arable. If the peasant laid any of his land down in grass he robbed the curé of his tithe; if he ploughed up his meadow he diminished the grazing land; if he sowed his fallows with clover, he could not prevent the flocks of the seigneur or of the convent eating up his crop. His land was burdened with fruit-trees, which were let for the benefit of the seigneur or the abbey; these trees he could not destroy, but was obliged to replace them when dead. The shade of these trees, the damage caused by gathering the fruit, and the ground occupied by their roots, caused him a very great loss.

In addition to all this the seigneur had the right of sporting, of walking over the crops and injuring the harvests in all seasons; and if the peasant killed one single head of game even on his own land he risked being sent to the galleys. The seigneur and the abbey had also the right of sending their cattle to graze an hour earlier than the peasant could send his beasts, which of course suffered in consequence.

The farm of the seigneur or of the abbey had also exclusive right to a dovecot; their pigeons covered the fields by thousands, and hemp, peas, beans, had to be sown thrice over if a crop was to be hoped for. Then, every father of a family owed the seigneur in the course of the year fifteen bichets of oats, ten fowls, twenty-four eggs. He had to give up to him three working days—three for each of his sons or his servants, and three

days' cartage or horse labour. He had to mow his meadow round the château, make his hay, and cart it to the barn at the first sound of the bell, subject to a fine of five sous each time he failed. He had also to cart both stones and timber when required for repairing the château or the farm. The seigneur fed him on a crust of bread and a clove or garlic—that is what was called the *corvée*, or forced labour. I must also mention the manorial bakehouse, the manorial mill, the manorial press, where the whole village was obliged to go, of course by paying. I will just notice the executioner, who had a right to the skin of every dead beast; and lastly the tithe, the worst of all, was, the curés took the eleventh sheaf of corn, at a time when so many monks, canons, carmelites, capucins, and mendicant friars of all sorts were to be fed. If I were to speak of all these impositions, and of a thousand others which crushed the country population down to the ground, I should never come to an end.

It seemed as if the seigneurs and the convents had leagued together to exterminate the wretched peasantry, and that they took all possible means to succeed.

And even now the measure was not yet full. As long as our country remained under the rule of the dukes, the exactions of his highness, as well as those of the seigneurs, abbeys, priories, convents of men and convents of women, were quite enough to ruin us all; but after the death of Stanilas and the incorporation of Lorraine with France, there had to be added the king's capitation tax—that is, the father of every family had to pay twelve sous a head for every child and every servant—the king's supply; so much for the furniture—the king's twentieth, which meant the twentieth of the net pro-

duce of the land, but only of the peasants' land, the seigneurs and the clergy paid no twentieth; then the tax on salt and tobacco, from which the seigneurs and the priests were also exempted; and lastly the king's excise or assessed taxes.

Then, again, if the princes, seigneurs, and convents, who had kept the best land to themselves for ages past, obliging the wretched peasants to plough, to sow, to reap for them, compelling them to pay all costs or contributions as well—if they had used their wealth in making roads, digging canals, draining marshes, manuring the soil, building schools and hospitals; if they had done this the evil would have been only half as great; but their only cares were their pleasures, their pride, and their greed.

When one saw the Cardinal Louis de Rohan, a prince of the Church, as he was called, living in debauchery at Saverne, turning decent people into ridicule, and causing the peasants to be beaten on the road before his carriage by his lackeys; when one saw at Neuville, Bouxviller, Hildeshausen, the great men build pheasantries, orangeries, and hothouses; lay out gardens, half a league in extent, full of vases, statues, and fountains, in imitation of the king at Versailles; not to speak of the loose women dressed out in silks, that they carried about with them amongst these poor people; when one saw droves of barefooted friars, cordeliers, and capucins begging and lounging about from New Year's Day to St. Sylvester; when one saw bailiffs, prévôts, seneschals, notaries, and judges of all sorts, only thinking of their fees, and living on exactions and fines; when one saw a thousand similar grievances, it was sad indeed, the more sad because the sons of the peasants alone sup-

ported this state of things against their fathers, their friends, and themselves.

Once enlisted, these sons of peasants forgot the distress in their villages, forgot their mothers and sisters; they only acknowledged their officers, their colonels—nobles who had bought them, and at whose command they would massacre every one, for the honour of their colours! Yet not one of these men could rise to become an officer: clowns were unworthy of the epaulette; but after having been wounded in battle, they were allowed to beg their way. The knowing ones picked up recruits in the taverns and tried to swindle them out of the bounty money, the bolder turned highwaymen; sometimes one or two companies of gendarmes were sent against them. I saw a dozen hanged at Phalsbourg, nearly all old soldiers, disbanded after the seven years' war. They had lost the habit of work and did not get a livre of pension, and were all taken at Vilschberg after having stopped a diligence near Saverne. Any one can now understand what the *ancien régime* was like—the nobles and the priests had everything, the people nothing.

II.

THANK God this is all over now ! The peasants have acquired their share in the good things of the earth, and naturally I have not remained behind. Every one hereabouts knows Father Michel's farm, his Valtin meadows, his fine Swiss cows, wandering about the fir-forests, and his twelve big plough oxen.

I have nothing to complain of : my grandson, Jacques, is at the Polytechnic School in Paris, in the first class ; my granddaughter, Christine, is married to the inspector of forests, Martin, a man with plenty of good sense ; my granddaughter, Juliette, is the wife of Commandant Forbin, of the Engineers ; and the last one, Michel, whom I may be said to like the best, because he is the last, is going to be a doctor—he passed his bachelor examination last year at Nancy ; if he works he will get on.

I owe all this to the Revolution ! Before '89 I could have possessed nothing ; I might have worked all my life for the seigneur and the convent.

Sitting, as I do now, in my old arm-chair, in the middle of the big room, the old crockery in the rack over the door shining in the fire-light ; the old hen and her chickens coming and going ; my old dog stretched before the fire, his muzzle resting on his forefeet, looks me in the face for hours together ; when I see through the windows my apple-trees white with blossom, my old

beehives, and I hear the farm-lads singing and chattering with the girls in the yard; the ploughs going out, the hay-waggons coming in, whips cracking, horses neighing; as I sit thinking there, I call to mind the horrible hut in which my poor father and mother and sisters and brothers lived in 1780—its four bare and crazy walls, the windows stuffed with straw, the thatch worn down by rain, melted snow, and wind; a sort of black, rotten den, where we used to be smothered in smoke, and shiver from cold and hunger; when I think of these really brave people, of my good father, and of my mother courageously and ceaselessly working to give us a few beans for food; when I see them before me covered with rags, the picture of misery—it makes me shudder, and, if I am by myself, I begin to cry.

The indignation I feel for those who made us drag out such a miserable existence, in order to screw the last farthing from us, will never be extinguished; my eighty-five years count for nothing; the older I grow the stronger I feel. And when I think that sons of the people, the Gros-Jacques, the Gros-Jeans, the Guillots, dare to write in their papers that the Revolution destroyed everything—that we were much more honest, much happier before '89—what liars! Every time I get hold of one of their papers I tremble with rage. It is of no use for Michel to say—

“What is the use of being angry, grandfather? Those fellows are paid to deceive people, to lead them back into ignorance; it is their business, it is their only means of living.”

I reply—

“No; we shot dozens of men from '92 to '99 a thousand times better than these; they were the nobles, the

soldiers of Condé, they fought for their principles ! But to betray father, mother, children, and country, to fill one's belly, is too much !”

If I were to read these rascally papers often I should have a fit ; fortunately my wife puts it out of sight if one chances to find its way to the farm. But they are like the plague, they get everywhere without being sought for.

This, then, is the reason I have made up my mind to write this story—the story of a peasant—to destroy this spite, and to let the world know what we underwent. It is some time since I first thought of it. My wife has preserved all our old letters. This work will give me some trouble, but one must not mind trouble if one means to do good ; besides, there is a great deal of pleasure in worrying those who vex us ; were it only for that I could spend years at my desk, spectacles on nose.

It will amuse me, and will do me good, to think we have driven those rascals away. I need not hurry myself ; just one thing will occur to me and then another, and I shall put down everything in its turn ; without order nothing goes right.

Now I begin.

I am not to be made to believe that the peasantry was happy before the Revolution ; I have seen what they call “ the good old times ;” I have seen our old villages ; I have seen the manorial bakehouse where they baked their cake once a year, and the manorial wine-press, where they only went when forced to work for the seigneur or the abbey ; I have seen the lean, scraggy labourers, with neither shirts nor sabots, but only a frock and linen pantaloons, summer and winter

alike; their wives, so sunburnt, so filthy and ragged that they might be taken for beasts; their children hanging about the doors, with nothing but a rag to cover them round their loins. Even the seigneurs themselves could not help writing in their books at that time "that the poor animals bent over the ground in sunshine and in rain to get bread for every one, ought at least to have a little of it to eat." They wrote thus in a moment of good feeling, and then they thought no more of it. These things are never to be forgotten; ask Mittelbronn, Hultenhausen, Baraques, ask all the country round. And the old people used to speak of a state of things still worse; they talked about the great war of the Swedes and the French, and the Lorrainers—the seven years' war—when they hanged the peasants to the trees in bunches; they spoke of the great plague which followed to complete the ruin of every one. You could go for leagues without meeting a soul. They used to cry with uplifted hands, "O Lord God, save us from the plague, from war, and from famine!" As for famine, they had it every year. With sixteen chapters, twenty-eight abbeys, thirty-six priories, forty-seven convents for men, and nineteen for women, in one single diocese, besides several lordships, how could sufficient beans, peas, and vegetables be harvested for winter? They had not yet learned to plant potatoes, and the poor had nothing but hard pulse to eat; how could they get food enough?

No day labourer could.

After forced labour in ploughing, sowing, hoeing, mowing, haymaking, carting—and in the vine districts in the vintage also—in fact, after this amount of forced labour, when the good times were employed in getting

in the crops for the seigneur and the abbey, what could a man do for self and children? Nothing. So as soon as the dead season arrived three-fourths of the villagers set out to beg.

The capucins of Phalsbourg complained if every one took up their trade they would leave the country, which would be a great loss to religion. In consequence of this, M. Schneider, the prévôt, and the Marquis Talaru, the governor of the town, forbade mendicancy, and police-sergeants, and even detachments of the regiments of Rouergue, Schénau, and La Fare gave their help to the capucins. It was risking the galleys, but life was sweet; the poor set out in troops, in spite of all, to look for food.

Want! that is what lowers a man; I repeat, want and bad example. When one met on all the roads capucins, cordeliers, barefooted friars—fellows six feet high, strong as bullocks, fit to roll a wheelbarrow—when one saw them daily walking about with their long beards and hairy arms, holding out their hands without any shame, and grinning for a couple of liards—how could the poor ever respect themselves?

Unfortunately it is not enough to beg for bread if one is hungry, but others must have it to give; it was the usual phrase, “Every one for himself, God for us all!”

Towards the close of the winter a report was usually spread that some band had been robbing carriages either in Alsace or Lorraine. Troops were put in motion, and the business was concluded by hanging a number of men.

Just fancy in these days a poor basket-maker with a wife and six children, without a sou or an inch of

ground; neither goat nor fowl—in fact, with no other means of subsistence but his labour, and no hope either for him or for his children of a change for the better! So it was ordained—some came into the world noble, and ought to have everything, and the others were born labourers, and consequently were doomed to live in misery from generation to generation. Fancy this state of things; long days of hunger, winter nights without covering, the dread of tax-gatherers, police-sergeants, gamekeepers, bailiffs! Well, in spite of all that, when spring came, after a long winter, when the sun shone upon the lonely hut, lighting the cobwebs on the beams, the little hearth, in the left-hand corner, the foot of the ladder on the right, the clay floor, and the heat, the pleasant heat which warmed us; when the cricket began to chirp, the woods to grow green again, in spite of all we were happy in life, happy to stretch ourselves at the door, holding our little naked feet in our hands, happy to laugh and whistle, to look up in the sky while rolling in the dust.

When we saw our father coming from the woods, with a great faggot of green broom or branches of birch on his shoulders, his hair hanging over his face, with a smile upon it when he saw us at a distance, we used all to run and meet him; then he would put the faggot on end for a minute while he kissed the little ones, his face, his blue eyes, his nose a little heavy at the tip, his thick lips lighted up; he really seemed happy.

How good he was! how he loved us! And then our mother, grey and wrinkled at forty; for all that, full of courage, always in the fields, digging others' ground, every evening spinning others' hemp and flax to feed her brood and pay all sorts of dues and exac-

tions. What courage, and yet what misery, thus to work continually with no other hope of reward than what is to be found in life eternal! And this was not all. The poor creatures had another sore the worst of all the sores of the peasant: they were in debt!

I remember, when quite a child, hearing my father say, on his return from selling some baskets or a few dozen brooms in the town—

“Here is the salt, the beans, and the rice, but I have not a sou left. O Lord! O Lord! I was in hope of bringing back a few sous for M. Robin!”

This M. Robin was the richest rogue in Mittelbronn, a big man with a great grey beard, an otter-skin cap tied under the chin, a large nose, yellow complexion, round eyes, with a sort of a bag over his shoulders like a short gown. He went about on foot with long linen gaiters up to his knees, a large basket on his arm, and a wolf-dog at his heels. This man went all round the neighbourhood getting in the interest owing him, for he lent money to every one, three livres at a time or six livres, up to one or two louis d’or. He used to walk into the houses, and if his money was not ready, he would pocket anything in the interim; half-a-dozen eggs, a pound of butter, a bottle of kirsch, a piece of cheese, or whatever they had. So that they got time from him, they would rather let him rob them in that way than have a visit from a bailiff.

How many there are to this day eaten up by similar robbers! How many there are labouring in misery under the weight of debt, and wear away without seeing any end to their troubles!

In our place there was nothing for Robin to take, so he tapped at the window and cried out, “Jean-Pierre!”

Then my father would run to the door in a tremble, and, cap in hand, say—

“ M. Robin !”

“ Ah, look here, I have two *corvées* to work out on the road to Herauge or to Lixheim—can you come ?”

“ Yes, M. Robin, yes.”

“ To-morrow, without fail ?”

“ Yes, M. Robin.”

And off he went. My father would come in quite pale, sit down by the hearth, and go on plaiting without speaking, holding his head down and biting his lips. Next morning he was working out the *corvées* of M. Robin, and mother would cry, “ Oh, that beggarly she-goat ! we have already paid for her ten times over ; she’s dead, and she will be the death of us all. What an unlucky idea it was to buy that old she-goat—unlucky indeed !” And then she would make herself miserable.

My father was off long before, with his pickaxe on his shoulder. But on those days the poor man brought nothing home. He had paid his interest for a month or two. That did not last long : just as they had become a little easy, M. Robin came tapping at the window again. I have heard talk of diseases which wear away the heart and dry up the sources of the blood, but this is the true disease of the poor. It is these usurers, who pretend to help you, and who live upon you till you are buried, and then they try to get the widow and children in their power. What my parents endured through this Robin is not to be described ; they grew old in trouble, they could not sleep, they had not a minute’s rest, and their only consolation was if one of us escaped the conscription he

could take the bounty as a recruit, and they could pay the debt.

We were four boys and two girls—Nicolas, Lisbeth, myself, Claude, Mathurine, and little Etienne, a poor little pale and delicate cripple, whom the Baraques people called the little duck, because he waddled on his poor deformed legs; all the others were strong and hearty.

Mother often said, when looking at Nicolas, Claude, and myself—

“Don’t fret so much, Jean-Pierre; among the three one must draw a lucky number. Then let Robin look out; as soon as he gets his money, I’ll split his head open with this axe.”

Wretched indeed must she be to entertain such ideas for a moment. Father would make no reply, and it was for us quite in the order of things to be sold; we thought ourselves as much the property of our father and mother as so many head of cattle. Great want prevents one from seeing things as they really are; before ’89, with the exception of the nobles and the bourgeois, every father of a family looked on his children as property; that is what some think so right, and what makes them say that their fathers and mothers were held in greater respect, which is pure nonsense.

Fortunately our father was too good-hearted to try and make a profit out of us; often the poor man cried when in the middle of a famine in winter he was obliged to send us out begging, like every one else. He would never let little Etienne go out in the snow. I did not go out begging long either; I can just remember going out on the road to Mittelbronn or the Quatre-Vents two or three times, when very young, for when I was eight years old, my godfather, Jean Leroux, the black-

smith, who kept an inn at the other end of the village, had taken me to look after his cattle, and I only went home to sleep.

These things happened long, long ago, and yet the Three Pigeons Inn is always before my eyes, with its tall signpost by the roadside; Phalsbourg grey in the distance against the sky; in front of the inn the little black forge, and behind it a sloping orchard, the great oak-tree, and the streamlet running through it. The water of the spring bubbled over some big stones placed there on purpose, and spread over the thick turf, and the oak covered it with its shade. All round this oak the soldiers belonging to the regiment de Boccart, in 1778, had made a bench and raised bowers of ivy and honeysuckle, by order of Major Bachmann; since then officers of the different regiments came to this spot, which they called Tivoli, to amuse themselves. The wives and daughters of the *échevins* and the *syndics* all wanted to drink the Tivoli water on Sundays, and to dance under the oak-tree.

There it was that the tall Chevalier d'Ozé, belonging to the regiment de Brie, standing above the spring, lifted up his bottle full of water and spouted Latin with his eyes turned up. The ladies, seated on the grass with their beautiful dresses of thick brocade, their little satin shoes with steel buckles, and their round hats, with poppies and daisies twined round them, listened and laughed without understanding a word; and when Quartermaster de Venier, with his little violin, began to play minuets, the Chevaliers de Sigueville, de Saint Féral, de Contréglise, all these fools, with their little hats cocked over the ear, got up, extended one leg, and offered a hand to a lady, who hastened to smooth down her

dress and take her place ; they then danced with gravity and stateliness. The servants, all old soldiers, went to the inn for baskets of wine, pies, and preserves, which an ass had conveyed from the town.

The poor of Baraques, standing in the dusty road, flattening their noses against the palings of the orchard, watched all these fine people, more especially when the corks were drawn and the pies opened ; every one wished to be there then, just for one quarter of an hour.

Then when night came M.M. the officers gave their arms to the ladies, and the noble company slowly returned to Phalsbourg.

Many regiments visted the Tivoli of Maître Jean ; up to 1791 those of Castella, Rouergue, Schénau, La Fare, Royal Auvergne. The échevins, syndics, and counselors came too, in their great well-powdered wigs and their wide black coats, white with flour down the backs ; they led a pleasant life. Now of all who danced and of all who looked on, I am without doubt the only one remaining ; if I did not talk about them one would no more bestow a thought upon them than on the autumn leaves of 1778.

Once in my godfather's service I had nothing to complain of : I had a new pair of shoes every year and my food ; how many others would have been glad to have had as much ! I knew it, and I neglected nothing in my endeavour to please Maître Jean, Madame Catherine his wife, and even the apprentice Valentine, and the maid-servant Nicole. I was well with everybody. I ran when called either to blow the forge-bellows, or to go up into the loft and throw down the hay for the cattle. I would not have fallen out with the house-cat, for there was a great difference between sitting at a good

table with a good soup, a dish of cabbage, with bacon added on Sundays, and as much good rye-bread as you can eat, and having one's nose bent over a saucer of beans with the little salt that the mother can spare, and counting every spoonful.

Once well off try to remain so ; therefore every morning, in the summer at four, in the winter at five, while the people of the inn were fast asleep, and the cows chewed the cud in the stable, I was already at the door, at which I gave two gentle knocks. This awoke the girl, who got up and opened the door in the dark. I lighted my lantern from the ashes in the kitchen ; then while Nicole milked the cows I went up to the granary for oats and hay, and I gave a feed to the horses of the waggoners and grain-dealers who slept at the inn the night before market-days. They got up, looked at everything, and found it all right ; then I helped them to get their carts from the shed, bridle their horses, and buckle their harness ; and when they started and began to cry, " Hue, Fox ! Hue, Rappel !" I wished them good-day with my little woollen cap in my hand.

These great waggoners and flour-dealers they never took the trouble to answer me, but they were satisfied, and had no fault to find, that was the great thing.

When Nicole came back to the kitchen she gave me a saucer of curds and whey, which I ate with an appetite. She then gave me a great piece of bread to take to pasture with me, two or three fine onions, sometimes a hard-boiled egg, or a bit of butter. I put everything in my bag, and then I went to the stable, cracking my whip. The animals came out one after the other ; I patted them, and then we went in single file down

the valley of the Rocks, I running last as happy as possible.

The Phalsbourg people, who go to bathe in the valley of the Zorne, know these masses of rocks, heaped up as far as one can see, a scanty heath growing in the fissures, the little streamlet full of cresses from the springs below, which is dried up by the time June's white butterflies are come.

There I used to go, for we had a right of pasture on the waste lands of the town, and it was only towards the end of August, when there was nothing left for the cattle to graze on, that we went to the forest. All this time I was out in the air.

The herdsman of Phalsbourg only brought out the swine, which, in the heat of the day, made a hole in the sandy soil and huddled themselves up together. There they slept, flapping their eyes with their pink ears ; one might tread on them without making them move.

Boys used to come there from other villages, one with an old blind horse, another with a mangy cow, many with nothing to do but crack a whip, whistle, or dig up the turnips, carrots, and radishes in the fields. If the Garde Champêtre caught them, he walked them into town, with a collar of stinging-nettles round their necks, which was all the same to them ; the only thing they cared for much was, the second or third time it happened, according to their age, to be publicly whipped on market-days. The executioner scratched their backs with his bull's-hide whip ; if they repeated it they were sent to prison. Many a time have I recollected seeing the grandmothers and grandfathers of such people, who exclaimed against the Revolution, whipped in the good old days. I could not help

laughing ; one meets with curious things in this world !

However, I too am bound to confess that I regret the past, not on account of the floggings or the prévôt, the seigneurs or the capucins ; no, but because I was young then ; and if our superiors were worth but little, the heaven above us was beautiful still. My big brother Nicolas and the rest of them, Claude, Lisbeth, Mathurine, would come and take possession of my bag, and we cried and wrangled over it. If they took all, Maître Jean would have paid them a visit in the evening at our hut ; they were afraid of that, so they left me my share, and they called me—their canon !

At other times our big Nicolas protected me. Then all the villages, Hultenhausen, Lutzelsbourg, the Quatre-Vents, Mittelbronn, the Baraques above and below, fought with sticks and stones ; Nicolas, with the remains of an old cocked hat on the back of his head, an old soldier's coat, all in rags, buttoned down his thighs, with a great cudgel in his hand, and naked feet, marched at the head of the Baraquins like a savage chief ; he screamed " Forward " so loud that he could be heard at Dann.

I could not help loving him, for every moment he called out, " The first that hits Michel had better look out ! " but all the same he took my onions away from me, which was very disagreeable.

They used to make the animals fight, and when they were struggling with their horns locked together, Nicolas laughed and encouraged them. They often injured themselves, and sometimes left a horn on the field of battle. In the evening we sat in the shade, leaning against a rock, watching the approach of night,

listening to the buzzing in the air and the frogs beginning to croak in the stream farther off.

Then came the time to go home. Nicolas blew the horn, the echoes from the rocks repeated it, the cattle collected together and followed in a line to Baraques in a cloud of dust. I put ours in the stable, filled the mangers, and had my supper with Maître Jean, Madame Catherine, and Nicolas. In summer, when they worked at the forge, I blew the bellows till ten, and I went home to sleep in my father's hut at the other end of the village.

III.

FIVE years passed on, my brothers and sisters continued begging, and I took all possible pains to be useful to my godfather. When I was ten years old the idea of learning a trade and of earning my bread myself had already occurred to me; Maître Jean noticed it, and kept me at the forge as much as he could.

Every time I think of it I fancy I can hear my godfather's voice cry, "Courage, Michel, courage!"

He was a tall, stout man, with large red whiskers, a long pigtail hanging down his back, and his moustaches so long and thick, that he could turn them back behind his ears. In those days the farriers of the hussars wore such whiskers, and the tail fastened behind. I fancy my godfather wanted to look like them. He had great grey eyes, a thick nose, round cheeks—when he did laugh he laughed loud. His leathern apron came up under his chin, and his great arms were naked at the forge in the middle of winter. Every moment he wrangled with his apprentice, Valentine, a tall, stooping, lanky fellow, who thought everything right in this world—nobles, monks, freedoms of companies, everything!

"But, you fool!" cried my godfather to him, "if

these things did not exist you would have been a master blacksmith, like myself, long ago ; you might have got something together and have lived comfortably."

"It's all the same," said Valentine. "You may think as you will ; as for me, I am all for our holy religion, the nobility, and the king ; that is the state of things which God has ordained !"

Then would Maître Jean shrug his shoulders and say—

"Well, if you think everything is right, I have no objection—go on !"

And then they went on hammering.

I never met with a better fellow than Valentine, but he had no head, and he argued like a goose. It was not his fault, and he ought not to be blamed for it.

Mistress Catherine was of the same opinion as her husband, and Nicole thought like her mistress.

The inn prospered, Maître Jean put by money every year, and when the officials were appointed to settle about the *corvées*, the head-money, and other exactions at Baraques, he was always on the list, with the master woodcutter, Cochart, and the great wheelwright, Létumier, who was also making three or four hundred livres.

You must know at that time the usual road for the waggoners, carters, and marsh cultivators of Alsace going to the town was to pass by Baraques ; but the road from Saverne to Phalsbourg was straight up hill, stony, full of ruts and even hollows, which threatened to overturn you into the Schlittenbach ; and as it required five or six extra horses to climb this hill, people used to go round by the valley of the Zorne, and both going and

coming they almost always stopped at the Three Pigeons.

The forge and the inn worked well together; while the horse was being shod or the cart mended, the driver stepped into the Three Pigeons; he could look out of window and see what was going on while he ate his crust of bread and drank his half-pint of white wine.

On fair-days the large room swarmed with customers; they came in crowds with their packages, baskets, and carts. On their road home they had nearly always a drop too much, and were free enough in speaking their mind. They grumbled without ceasing; the women especially never left off: they called the *prévôts* and *seigneurs* by their true names; they repeated instances of their abominable conduct, and when their husbands tried to stop them they called them a set of fools.

The farmers of Alsace were particularly bitter against the turnpike tolls, which cut down their profits, for they had to pay on coming from Alsace into Lorraine. The unlucky Jews who had to pay at every gate—so much for the Jew, and so much for his donkey—did not dare complain, but the others spared no one.

“Yes, it is a fact; they squeeze us to death; the duties are raised every day; but what can we do? The peasants are peasants, and the seigneurs are masters; as long as the world goes on the seigneurs will be at the top, and we must remain at the bottom. Well, let us trust in God. Here, Mistress Catherine, take your money and let’s be off.”

And off they all went. An old woman would begin to pray aloud to help them along the road, other women took it up, and the men with bowed heads followed meditating after.

I have often thought that this sort of burthen of question and answer saved them from thinking, and was a sort of relief to them. The idea never occurred to them of helping themselves—of getting rid of the saltmaker, collector, toll-taker, seigneurs, convents, and of all that bore upon them; and of putting the tithes, aids, twentieths—all exactions, in fact—into their own pockets, as they did later. They still trusted to the goodness of God.

But all this movement, these grumblings, this collection of Jews, waggoners, and peasants in the great room on fair-days, their quarrels over the price of oxen, corn, oats, and crops of all sorts; the expression of their faces when they shook hands over a bargain, and called for a pint of wine to wet it, according to custom—all this taught me to know both men and things. There could have been no better school for a boy; and if I have since acquired property, it is, that long before, I was already master of the value of land, stock, and crops. The old Jew Schmoulé and big Mathias Fischer, of Harberg, taught me all this, for they quarrelled often enough over the price of their wares.

You may believe me, when I was still quite little, I kept both eyes and ears open when running about with glasses and tankards. But what I liked best of all was to listen to Maître Jean when he read the newspaper after supper.

In these days the smallest country inn takes in a newspaper; the old *Messenger Boiteux* of Silberman, hanging by the window, is no longer in existence. Every one wants to know how the country gets on, and reads the *Courrier du Bas-Rhin* or the *Impartial de la Meurthe* at least two or three times a week; every one

is ashamed now of living like an ass, and of taking no notice of what is of interest to all. But before '89 those who had no right to trouble themselves about politics, and who were there to pay what exactions it was the king's pleasure to lay upon them, those people, I say, did not care to read ; in fact, most of them did not know their letters ; and besides, newspapers were very expensive, and Maître Jean, though very well off, did not like incurring such an expense for his amusement only.

The little book-hawker Chauvel fortunately used to bring us a bundle of papers on his return from his journeys in Alsace, Lorraine, or the Palatinate. This was one of the characters which have disappeared since the Revolution—the hawker of almanacks, prayer-books, hymns to the Virgin, catechisms, alphabets, &c., who went his rounds from Strasbourg to Metz, from Trèves to Nancy, Pont-à-Mousson, Toul, Verdun ; who was to be met on all the byroads, in the depth of the woods, at the gates of the farms, convents, and abbeys, the approaches to the villages, in his jacket of coarse cloth, his gaiters with bone buttons reaching to his knees, hobnailed shoes, his back bent, with a leather strap over his shoulder supporting an enormous wicker basket on his back. True he sold mass-books, but how many forbidden publications were smuggled besides—the works of Jean Jacques, Voltaire, Raynal, Helvetius !

Father Chauvel was the boldest as well as the cleverest of all these Alsatian and Lorraine smugglers. He was a little, dry, nervous, dark man, with pinched-up lips and a hooked nose. His basket seemed to break him down, but he really carried it easily enough. As you passed him his little black eyes seemed to look through

you; he could read you at a glance, whether you wanted anything, or whether you belonged to the police; whether to be on his guard against you, or to ask you to buy. He was obliged to be so, for if taken in this sort of contraband trade he would have been sent to the galleys.

Every time he came home from his journeys, Chauvel came first to us, about nightfall, when the inn was empty and the village silent. Then he appeared with his little Margaret, who never left him, not even in his rounds; and we only heard their steps in the alley to say, "Here's Chauvel! now we shall hear the news." Nicole ran to open the door and Chauvel came in, with a nod of the head, holding his child in his hand. This remembrance takes seventy-five years off my age. I see him now with Margaret brown as a whortleberry, in her linnen gown with a blue fringe, and her black hair falling over her shoulders.

Chauvel handed the bundle of newspapers to Nicole, and sat down behind the stove with his little girl between his knees. Maître Jean would turn round to him and cry out—

"Well, Chauvel, all goes on well, eh?"

"Yes, well, Maître Jean; the people buy plenty of books, they begin to learn," would the little man answer.

While he was speaking, Margaret would pay great attention to him. It was clear she understood all that was said.

They were Calvinists, the true Rochellois Calvinists, who had been hunted from thence, and then again from Lixheim, and who had been living at the Baraques for the last ten or twelve years. They stayed nowhere any

length of time. Their old cottage was nearly always closed; when they came home they opened it, and remained five or six days to rest themselves, then they set off again book-selling. They were looked upon as heretics, which did not prevent Chauvel from knowing more than all the capucins in the country.

Maître Jean was very fond of this little man; they understood one another perfectly.

After opening the bundle of newspapers on the table, and looking at them a moment or two, Maître Jean would say—

“This comes from Utrecht, this from Cleves, this from Amsterdam—now we shall see what is going on. Nicole, fetch my spectacles: they are there by the window.”

Maître Jean, after having luxuriated in this manner for some minutes, would begin to read, while I sat breathless in my corner. I forgot everything, even the danger of going home late in winter when the village was covered with snow, and packs of wolves had crossed the Rhine on the ice.

I ought to have gone home directly after supper; my father used to wait for me; but my curiosity to hear the news of the Great Turk, of America, and of all the countries in the world, was too great; I stayed sometimes till past ten; even now I can see myself in my corner on the left of the old clock, the walnut wardrobe and the door of Maître Jean's sleeping-room on the right, and the large inn table in front of me under the little dark windows. Maître Jean is reading, Mother Catherine, a little woman with pink cheeks, her ears covered with a white hood, is spinning, and Nicole, too, with her cap like a bag at the back of her head. Poor Nicole

was as red as a carrot, freckled all over, with white eyelashes. Yes, I see it all—the spinning-wheels hum, the old clock ticks, from time to time it rattles, down go the weights, it strikes, and then goes on ticking. Maître Jean in his arm-chair, his iron spectacles on his nose—like me now—with his red ears and his large rough whiskers, attends to nothing but his paper; sometimes he turns round, and lifting his spectacles up, says—

“Here is news from America. General Washington has beaten the English. Did you observe that, Chauvel?”

“Yes, Maître Jean,” says the hawker, “these Americans only began their rebellion three or four years ago. They would not pay the quantity of taxes that the English were increasing daily, as is done often elsewhere, and their cause is flourishing.”

Then he would smile for a second without opening his lips, and Maître Jean would go on reading.

Then Frederick II. would be mentioned—that old Prussian fox, who wanted to begin his tricks again.

“Old beggar,” Maître Jean would mutter; “had it not been for M. de Soubise, he would not get his back up. We owe Rosbach to this great fool.”

“Yes,” said Chauvel, “and that is why his majesty has granted him a pension of fifteen hundred thousand livres.”

Then, after looking at one another in silence, Maître Jean repeated—

“Fifteen hundred thousand livres to that idiot! and they cannot spare a sou to mend the royal road between Saverne and Phalsbourg. Thousands of country people are obliged to go a league out of their road to cross

from Alsace into Lorraine, and bread, meat, and wine getting dearer and dearer."

"How can you help it?" said the Calvinist. "Those are politics, and we know nothing about politics; we have only to work and to pay—the king's business is to spend."

When Maître Jean became very excited, Catherine would jump up and listen in the passage; then he became quiet, for my godfather knew what that meant. It was necessary to be careful, for informers prowled about everywhere, and if they had heard our way of thinking about princes and lords, we should have heard of it again.

Chauvel and his little daughter used to go home early, but I would stay behind to the last minute. Maître Jean, in folding the *Gazette*, would see me and cry out—

"What, Michel! what are you doing there? do you understand all this?"

Then, without waiting for an answer—

"Come, be off; to-morrow morning there will be work to be done. It is market-day, and the forge fire will be alight early—be off, Michel, be off."

It then would occur to me the wolves sometimes came down into the village, and I would run and light a torch in the kitchen. The little window looking into the yard was as black as ink. I could hear the north-east wind sighing out of doors. I shivered while Nicole opened the door for me.

I almost lost my breath when I found myself outside at night, seeing the wide road winding between the old cottages buried in snow, and hearing the wind blow, and sometimes the wolves howling and answering one another down in the fields. I used to run till I lost

breath, my hair stood on end, and I jumped over the heaps of snow and manure like a kid. The old roofs of thatch, the windows beneath stopped up with straw, with frost hanging to it, the small doors barricaded, all looked frightful by the light of my torch—everything seemed dead. But as I ran along I could see at the end of the lanes certain shadows come and go, and this sight terrified me so that when I got to our hut I threw myself against the door as if I was lost.

My poor father was there by the fire in his old patched linen pantaloons, and would say—

“My child, you come home too late; they are all asleep; have you been hearing the newspaper read?”

“Yes, father—take this.”

I would give him the bread Maître Jean always gave me after supper. He took it, and said, “Go to bed, my child, and do not come home again so late, there are so many wolves about now.”

I lay down by the side of my brothers in a great box full of leaves, with an old coverlid over it.

The others were fast asleep; they had been begging in the villages and on the high roads all day. I used to remain awake a long time listening to the wind, and sometimes a dull noise, in the midst of the silence. It was wolves attacking a stable; they would spring eight or ten feet high at the window, and fall back in the snow; suddenly a sharp cry or two would be heard, and all the pack was gone; they had taken a dog and were devouring him.

At other times I would shiver at hearing them blow and scratch under our door. Father used to get up and light a straw torch at the hearth, and the hungry brutes went farther on.

I have always thought the winters were longer then than in these days, and much more severe. Snow was often two and three feet deep ; it lay until April, on account of the great woods which have since been cleared, and of the numerous pools which the seigneurs and convents allowed to remain full in the valleys, that they might not be obliged to crop the land every year. It was less trouble. But this quantity of water, these woods and marshes, kept the country damp, and chilled the air.

Now, where every bit of land is cut up, cultivated, and sown, the sun penetrates everywhere, and spring comes earlier—at least I think so. But whatever may have been the cause, all old people will tell you that cold weather came sooner and lasted longer, and that every year packs of wolves would attack stables and carry off the watch-dogs, even out of the farmyards.

IV

Now at the end of one of these long winters, a fortnight or three weeks after Easter, something very uncommon took place at Les Baraques. That morning I rose late, as children do sometimes, and I ran off to the Three Pigeons, much afraid of being scolded by Nicole. We had to scour the floor of the great room, which was always done in the spring, as well as three or four times besides in the course of the year.

We could not have the cattle out to graze; the snow had only just begun to thaw behind the hedges, but it was already warm, and all up the street the doors and windows were open to let in fresh air; the cows and goats were turned out of their stables, to get the manure out and wash the stalls. Claude Huré was putting a bolt in his plough; in the shed, Pierre Vincent was stuffing his saddle again, the time for field-work was approaching, every one was getting ready for it, and the old men, with the pet children in their arms, stood at the doors of their huts breathing the fresh air of the mountains.

It was one of the first fine days of the year. As I came up to the inn, all the doors and windows of which were open, I saw the donkey of Father Benedict tied up to the ring at the door, a great tin can on his back, and two wicker baskets across his loins.

I thought Father Benedict was preaching in the house, as he often did when the inn was full of strangers, and he hoped to get a few liards out of them. He was the mendicant brother of the convent at Phalsbourg, an old capucin, with a yellow beard as hard as dog's grass, with a nose like a fig, covered with blue veins; flat ears, a retreating forehead, very small eyes, and his coarse cloth gown so worn that you might count every thread; the hood hanging in a point down the small of his back, and his dirty great toes projecting beyond his sandals. He had a smell of soup and wine, of which you became aware before you heard the tinkle of his little bell.

Maître Jean could not endure him, but Mistress Catherine had always a good piece of bacon ready for him, and if Jean was put out about it, she used to say—

“I intend to have my place in heaven as well as at church; you will be glad enough to find a seat by me in the kingdom of heaven.”

Then he laughed and said nothing.

I stepped in. Round the table in the large room were people from Les Baraques, waggoners from Alsace, Nicole, Madame Catherine, and Father Benedict. Maître Jean, in the middle of them, was showing them a great bag full of what looked like parings, and explaining that they came from Hanover, that they produced most excellent roots, and in great quantity, so that the poor would have something to eat all the year. He was trying to persuade them to plant them, assuring them they would never be in distress at Les Baraques again, which would be a real blessing to every one.

Maitre Jean told them this in a most solemn tone. Chauvel stood behind, listening with little Margaret.

Some took these husks or parings in their hands, looked at them, smelt them, and then put them back again in the bag with a laugh, as much as to say—

“Who ever heard of planting husks? It is contrary to common sense.”

Some nudged the others, as if to laugh at my godfather. All on a sudden Father Benedict, with his great nose and little screwed-up eyes, turned round and burst out laughing. Then they all began.

Maitre Jean, in a rage, said—

“You laugh, like fools as you are, without knowing why. Are you not ashamed to laugh and crack jokes when I am speaking seriously?”

Then they laughed louder than ever, and the capucin, catching sight of Chauvel, said—

“Ah, ha! this is smuggled seed—I thought it was!”

And so it was. Chauvel had brought them from the Palatinate, where several persons had grown them for some time, and spoke very well indeed of them.

“They are brought by a heretic,” cried Father Benedict; “how can Christians sow them or the Lord bless them?”

“You would be very thankful to have one of my roots to put under your own nose when they come up,” cried Maitre Jean, in a rage.

“When they do come up,” cried the capucin, holding his hands together with an air of pity; “when they do come up! Believe me, you have not land enough for your cabbages, turnips, and radishes. Let these husks alone, they will produce you nothing. I, Father Benedict, tell you so.”

"You tell us plenty of other things I don't believe," said Maître Jean, putting the bag back in the cupboard.

Directly afterwards he thought better of it, and made a sign to his wife to give the capucin a good slice of bread. Those beggars went everywhere, and had it in their power to do a great deal of mischief.

The capucin and the Baraques people left; I stayed behind, quite horrified at the jokes which had been made of my godfather. Father Benedict called out in the passage—

"I trust, Madame Catherine, you will sow something besides these Hanoverian husks; it is to be hoped you will! for I run a good chance of coming by here a hundred times without finding anything to load my donkey with. God of Heaven! I shall pray the Lord to enlighten you."

He snuffled and drawled on purpose. The rest of them out in the street laughed as they walked off, and Maître Jean at the window said—

"This is what one gets for trying to help such fools."

Chauvel replied—

"Those poor creatures are held in ignorance that they may work for the profit of the seigneurs and the monks; it is not their fault, Maître Leroux, and you should not blame them. If I had a bit of land I would plant these husks; they should see the crop, and then they would be in a hurry to follow my example; for, as I told you before, this plant produces six or seven-fold as much as any other grain or vegetable. Its roots are as large as my fist, very good to eat, very wholesome, and very nutritious. I have eaten them myself;

they are white, farinaceous, something resembling chestnuts; they may be cooked in butter or merely boiled; in any way they are always good."

"Never mind, Chauvel," cried Maître Jean, "if they will not have them so much the better, I shall keep them myself; instead of planting a part of my bit of land with them, I shall plant the whole of it."

"And you will do right. Every sort of soil is good for these roots," said Chauvel, "but especially a sandy one."

They left the house talking; Chauvel then returned to his hut, Maître Jean set to work at the forge, and Nicole and I cleared away the benches and tables to scour the floor.

I have never forgotten the impression which this dispute between Maître Jean and the capucin made on me, and you will easily believe me when I tell you that these grey husks which Chauvel brought were the first time potatoes had been seen by any of us—those potatoes which have kept us from want for twenty-five years.

Every summer when I see from my window as far as the eye can reach the immense plain of Dierneringen, covered up to the edge of the wood with great patches of green, which swell, and grow, and almost change the very dust into food for man; when in autumn I see thousands of sacks standing upright in the fields, and men, women, and children singing with pleasure as they hoist them into the carts; and when I fancy the happiness of the poor, even in the most wretched cottages, compared with the terror we used to feel, before '89, long before the month of September, because we began to foresee the approach of famine; when I think of the

difference between then and now, the jokes and laughter of these fools come into my mind again, and I say to myself, "Ah! Maître Jean, ah! Chauvel, would you could come to life again for an hour in harvest time, and sit down in a field to see the good you have done—that would be worth coming to life again for! And Father Benedict might do so also, only just to hear the laughter and hisses of the peasants when they saw him and his donkey begging along the roads."

While I think of these things, I imagine the Supreme Being in His justice has allowed them to rise again, to be again among us, and that each feels according to his good sense or his stupidity for ever and ever. May God grant that it may be so! That would be a real eternity of life.

And that is the manner in which potato seed was first received by us.

Maître Jean was very confident, but his troubles were not over. The people's stupidity was then at its height, and a story was spread about that Jean Leroux had lost his head, and had planted peelings of turnips to grow carrots. The grain-dealers and others who used the inn looked at him with curiosity when they asked him how he was. Of course these annoyances vexed him; he used to talk of them with bitterness in the evening, and it fretted his wife. But all that was said did not prevent his digging his bit of ground behind the inn thoroughly, manuring it well, and planting the Hanoverian husks in it. Nicole helped him, and I carried the bag.

The Baraques people and passers-by leaned over the little orchard wall which bordered the wood, winked their eyes, and said nothing.

Nothing was said, for they thought that Maître Jean

might lose patience, and reply to their jokes with his cudgel.

You would hardly credit all the jokes we had to put up with before the crop came. The greater fools people are, the greater pleasure they have in laughing at those who are wiser than they, when they get a chance; and the Baraquins thought they had a good one. Whenever the Hanoverian seed was mentioned, all these fools began to laugh. I was often obliged to fight with the village boys when out with the cattle; when they saw me come down the valley, they used to begin—

“Here’s the Hanoverian who carries the bag for Maître Jean.”

Then I began with my whip, and as they were ten to one, they flogged me unmercifully, to the cry of “Down with the Hanoverian roots! down with the Hanoverian roots!”

Unfortunately, neither Nicolas nor Claude was there then. Nicolas was at work, cutting down and lopping trees, and Claude plaited baskets and made brooms with father, or he fetched birch and broom from the neighbourhood of Trois-Fontaines, having leave from George, the Schwitzerhof forester for Mgr. the Cardinal Bishop, near St. Witt. So I had the storm all to myself, but I was too angry to cry.

Think, then, how anxious I was for the roots to strike, to the confusion of our enemies! Every morning as soon as it was light I took a look over the wall to see if anything was to be seen, and if I could see nothing I walked off sad enough, invariably accusing Father Benedict of having bewitched our ground.

Before the Revolution all peasants believed in witchcraft, and this belief had, in years gone by, brought

thousands of wretches to the stake. If I could have burned the capucin he would not have had to wait long, for I was most indignant with him.

I had at last become quite proud of fighting the Lutzelbourg, Baraques, and Quatre-Vents boys ; it was an honour to me to take the side of our roots, yet I never thought of boasting about it ; neither Maître Jean, nor Catherine, nor Valentine knew anything of it ; but father, when he saw at night my legs covered with red wales, was surprised.

"Why, Michel," said the poor man, "are you doing as Nicolas does, exchanging blows already ? Be careful, child ; one blow from a whip might destroy your sight, and then what is to become of us ?"

He shook his head sadly, and went on with his work.

In summer, when the moon was at the full, all the family worked at the door to save the beechmast oil. When in the far distance we could hear the town clock strike ten, father would rise, put by the brooms and the willow twigs, and then, looking up at the sky, white with stars, he would say—

"My God ! my God ! how great thou art ! O let thy goodness rest on Thy children !"

No one uttered these words so well and so tenderly as my poor father ; it was clear he knew and felt these things better than our monks, who paid as much attention to the Paternoster or the Belief, while they repeated it, as I do to a pinch of snuff when I take one.

Then we went indoors, and the day's work was over.

So passed May and June. Barley, rye, and oats grew perceptibly ; but in Maître Jean's field nothing was yet visible.

My father had often talked to me about the Hanover roots, and I explained to him all the good this plant might do us.

"God grant it, my child," he would say; "we want it all; distress becomes greater every day; taxes are too heavy, and the *corvées* take up too many of our days' work!"

And mother would cry—

"Yes, when, too, we are obliged to perform the *corvées* of other people, we do, indeed, want a plant of some sort to save us. God grant it may come, from Hanover or anywhere else; things cannot go on as they are."

She was indeed right. But still nothing seemed to grow on Maître Jean's land. My godfather began to think that Father Benedict had the laugh on his side, and he was thinking of digging his field again and planting lucerne. That was hard; for we could fancy how the country people would turn us into ridicule for years to come. Success is absolutely necessary to silence fools, and that is why so few like to attempt anything new; that is why we abide in the same ruts; it is the fear of fools, of their ridicule and their laughter, which checks men of courage and enterprise. If our agriculture is still behind the times, this is as much as anything the cause of it.

We were in despair.

If Chauvel had not gone on his rounds in Lorraine, Madame Catherine would have reproached him with this failure, for she laid all the blame on him.

One morning, between four and five, in the beginning of June, I was walking down the street as usual to awake Nicole, fodder the cattle, and take them out to graze. A good deal of dew had fallen in the night, and

towards Quatre-Vents the sun was rising hot and red. As I passed by the enclosure, before knocking at the door, I just looked over the wall, and what did I see? Tufts of white threads spreading right and left everywhere. The dew had softened the ground, and the shoots of our roots were coming up by thousands.

I jump into the field, make sure that these shoots are like nothing else in the country, and I run round to the back of the house. I knock at the shutters of the room where Maître Jean and his wife sleep; I knock like a madman.

Maître Jean calls out—

“Who’s there?”

“Open the door, godfather!”

He opens the door in his shirt.

“Godfather, the roots are growing.”

Maître Jean was very angry at being called out of bed, but when he heard that his fat face looked well pleased.

“They are coming up?”

“Yes, all over the field, from one end to the other; they have come up in a single night.”

“All right, Michel,” said he, hurrying on his clothes. “I’m coming. Ho! Catherine, the roots are coming up!”

His wife got up directly, and we went into the field together; they saw I had made no mistake; the shoots were everywhere; it was wonderful.

Maître Jean said in a tone of admiration—

“Everything that Chauvel tells us happens—the capucin and the rest will pull long faces! What luck! Now the rows must be hood, and I will do it myself. We will do exactly as Chauvel told us. That man is

full of sense, he knows more than we, and we cannot do better than follow his directions."

Mistress Catherine was of the same opinion.

We then returned to the inn, and opened the windows. I fed the cattle and set off, saying nothing to any one, I was too much astonished myself. But once in the valley, when the other boys began, "Here is the Hanoverian," instead of losing my temper, I answered them boldly—

"Yes, yes; I am the boy who carried Maître Jean's bag—I am Michel."

And then, seeing how surprised they were—

"Go and look," said I, pointing to the enclosure with my whip; "the roots are shooting, and many a beggar will be glad to have some in his cellar!"

I was proud indeed; the rest looked at one another in surprise; they thought in themselves—

"Perhaps it's true!"

Then they began hissing and calling me names again, but I made them no reply. My fancy for fighting was gone; I was right, and that was enough for me.

When I went home at six, nothing was said in the village, but the next day, the day after, and the following days, the news had been spread that Jean Leroux's roots were growing, and that they were neither turnips nor carrots, but quite a new plant; from morning till night people leaned over our wall and looked on in silence, but they laughed no more. Godfather enjoined us not to say anything to them, for it was better for them to acknowledge their mistake themselves than to reproach them with it.

Nevertheless, one evening as the capucin was passing by with his donkey, Maître Jean could not help saying—

"Come and see, Father Benedict. The Lord has blessed the heretical plant; come and see how it grows!"

"Yes," said the capucin, laughing, "I have seen it. Well, I thought it came from the devil, while it was sent by our Lord. All the same, we will eat them if they are good!"

Thus the capucins were always right. If anything went well the Lord did it, if wrong it was the work of the devil, and others had to put up with the loss.

O my God! what fools are men to listen to such creatures! The slothful deserve to be hunted from society, as much as infancy, old age, and infirmity are worthy of succour. It is a great consolation to me to think I never gave them anything. All beggars, capucins or others, who come to the farm are received in the kitchen at midday; they see the labourers and women-servants sleek and well fed, having a good dinner, as they deserve, after having worked hard for some time. The sight of this makes them hungry. My foreman, old Pierre, asks them, with his mouth full, what they want? If they begin to grimace, he puts the handle of a spade or pickaxe into their hands, and offers them work: they almost always slink away, with this reflection:—

"It seems these people won't work for us—a bad set!"

While I, standing at the door, wish them a happy journey.

If the capucins and other sluggards of the same cast had been treated in this way, they would not have brought the peasants to want, nor have lived for generations on their labour.

Now I must tell you about our potatoes coming into flower, and the crop, which brought Jean Leroux into greater repute in the country than he had ever enjoyed before.

In July the field of Maître Jean looked from the Mittelbronn side like a great green and white bouquet ; the rows were nearly as high as the wall.

While the great heat lasted, while everything was dried up in the fields, it was a pleasure to look at our fine plants, spreading larger and larger ; they only needed a little morning dew to keep them fresh, and we used to picture to ourselves the roots beneath gaining in size.

We dreamt about them all day ; in the evening we talked of nothing else. We even forgot the gazettes, for the affairs of the Great Turk and the Americans had less interest for us than our own.

In September, when we saw the flowers fall and the haulm dry every day, we thought—

“It is time to begin to dig.”

But godfather said—

“Chauvel told us to dig them in October. On the 1st of October we will try a plant or two, and if we must then wait, we will wait.”

The 1st of October was a foggy morning. About ten Maître Jean left the forge, went into the kitchen, took a fork from behind the door, and went into the potato-field.

We went after him.

At the first row he stopped and plunged his fork in, and when he had shaken off the clods of earth, and we saw these beautiful pink potatoes dropping about, when we saw that every plunge of the fork brought up as

many, and that in the length of five or six feet we had half filled a basket, we looked at one another with astonishment. We could hardly believe our eyes.

Maître Jean said nothing. He took some steps into the middle of the field and dug again. Here again the potatoes were as fine if not finer, which made Jean say—

“Now I see what to do—next year my two arpents of land on the hillside shall be planted with these roots; the seed we will sell at a fair price. What costs people nothing they think nothing of.”

His wife had put some potatoes into a basket; he took it, and we went back to the house.

When in the kitchen Maître Jean told me to go and fetch Chauvel, who had returned the previous evening from a long round in Lorraine. He lived with little Margaret at the other end of the Baraques. I ran to call him, and he came directly, guessing that Maître Jean had dug his potatoes, with a smile on his face.

As he came into the kitchen the blacksmith in triumph showed him the basket by the hearth, and said—

“These came from digging six feet, and I have put as many more in the pot.”

“Just so,” said Chauvel, without being in any way surprised—“just so; I told you how it would be.”

“You must dine with us, Chauvel, and we will taste them; if they are good it will make the fortune of the Baraques.”

“They are very good—you may trust me they are,” said the hawker; “it is a good speculation for you; you must make some hundreds of livres by the seed alone.”

“We shall see,” cried Maître Jean, who was very well pleased—“we shall see.”

Catherine had already broken the eggs for an omelette; she had put the great soup-tureen on table, from which a good cream soup was smoking. Nicole went to the cellar to fill the jug with small Alsatian white wine, and then she finished putting the dinner on table.

My godfather and Chauvel came into the room together. They saw that their roots would turn out well; but the idea was still far from occurring to them that they would change the position of the people, that they could put an end to famine, and that would be of more benefit to the human race than the king, or the seigneurs, or any of those who were made so much of; certainly not to Maître Jean, who chiefly looked at them with a view to his own profit, still not forgetting other and better things.

"If they only taste as good as turnips," said he, "I ask no more."

"They are much better than turnips; you can eat them all sorts of ways," answered Chauvel. "You may well believe, if I had not thought it was a good plant, and a useful one for you and for every one, I should not have put these cuttings in my basket—it is heavy enough without that—nor should I have advised you to plant your field with them."

"Without doubt; but I must have my say. I am like St. Thomas—I must touch and I must see," said Maître Jean.

And the little Calvinist, with a quiet smile, answered—

"You are quite right, and now you can touch. Nicole has got the dinner on table; you won't wait long."

Everything was ready.

In those days master and servants dined together,

but the maid and the mistress waited at table; they only sat down after the others had dined.

We had just sat down, Maître Jean and Chauvel by the wall on one side, little Margaret and myself on the other; we were about falling to, when my godfather called out—

“Ha! here’s Christopher!”

It was M. Christopher Materne, curate of Lutzelbourg, a tall, red-haired, curly-headed man, like all the Maternes of the mountain. Godfather saw him go by the window, and we already heard him stamping the dirt off his iron-heeled shoes; immediately afterwards in he came, his broad shoulders stooping under the little door, his breviary under his arm, a big holly-stick in his hand, and a battered cocked hat on his grizzled head.

“Ah! ah!” cried he, in an awfully deep voice, “I catch you at last, you heretical rascals! I am sure you are plotting to re-establish the Edict of Nantes.”

“You have come just in time, Christopher,” replied Maître Jean, quite delighted; “sit down—look!”

I lifted up the lid of the tureen.

“That’s good,” said the curate, good-humouredly, hanging his hat against the wall, and putting his stick by the side of the clock. “Yes, yes, I see what you are at: you want to pacify me, Jean, but it won’t do; this fellow Chauvel is corrupting you; I must really speak to the prévôt about him.”

“And where will MM. the curés of the mountain get their Jean-Jacques from?” asked Chauvel maliciously.

“Hold your tongue, you scoffer,” said the curé; “all your philosophers are not worth a verse of the Gospel.”

“Of the Gospel indeed!” said the little Calvinist; “that is all we ever asked for, we Protestants.”

"Yes, yes," said M. Materne, "you are fine fellows, Chauvel; we know it, but we know the other side of the cards as well as you."

Then turning to Margaret and me, and putting his long legs between us two, he said in a kindly tone—

"Come, children, make room for me."

We made room for him, pushing plates right and left out of his way. At last the curé was seated, and while he was eating his soup I was watching him from my end of the bench without daring to lift my nose out of my plate; his great grey eyes, his grizzled hair, and his gigantic hands frightened me so.

This brave curé Christopher was all the same an excellent man. Instead of quietly living on his tithes, and saving up for his old age, like many of his brethren, his only thought was to work and devote himself to others. In the winter he kept the village school himself; and in summer, when the children were away at the grazing-grounds, he carved figures of male and female saints in oak or stone for those parishes which could not afford to buy them. You took him a piece of wood or a block of stone, and he sent you in return St. John, the Holy Virgin, or the Eternal Father.

Maître Jean and M. Materne both came from the same village; they were two old friends, and were very fond of one another.

"Tell me, Christopher," said my godfather suddenly, when he had finished his soup, "are you soon going to open your school again?"

"Yes, Jean, next week," replied the curé; "that is what has brought me here; I am going to Phalsbourg for paper and books. I intended beginning on the 20th of September, but I had to finish a St. Peter for Aber-

schwiller parish, which is rebuilding its church. I had promised it, and I mean to keep my promise."

"Then it will be next week?"

"Yes, next Monday we shall begin."

"You might as well take that boy there," said my godfather, pointing to me; "he is my godson, a son of Jean-Pierre Bastien. I am sure he would be very glad to learn."

When I heard that I coloured up with pleasure, for I had long wanted to go to school.

M. Christopher turned round to me.

"Now then," said he, laying his great hand on my head, "look at me."

I took a timid look at him.

"What is your name?"

"Michel, M. Curé."

"Well, then, Michel, you may come. My school is open for every one—the more pupils that come the better I am pleased!"

"That is right," said Chauvel—"that is the way to talk."

And Maître Jean drank his friend Christopher's health.

Those who go quietly to their village school in these days, where they are instructed for next to nothing by a man who is often fit for better things, can hardly believe how many before the Revolution would have envied them; no more could they imagine the delight of a poor boy like me, when the curé agreed to take me, when I said to myself—

"You will be able to read and write; you will not live in ignorance like your unfortunate parents!"

No, one must have felt these things to understand

them, and have lived in such times ; therefore the poor creatures who have not the advantage of such a blessing are indeed to be pitied ; they will know some day what it is to pass their lives working hard for others ; and they will have time to regret it. As for me, I was, as it were, dazzled by my good fortune. I wanted to run home to tell my father and mother ; I could not keep quiet.

All I remember now of that day is, that after the omelette Catherine brought the potatoes on in a basket. They were boiled, white, the skins bursting, the flowery part dropping from them. M. Christopher leant over them and asked—

“What is that, Jean ? where does it come from ?”

My godfather having told us all to taste them, we found them so nice that every one said—

“We never ate anything so good.”

The curé, when told that these were the roots which all the country had despised, and that they produced fifteen sacks to the quarter of an arpent, would not believe it.

“It is too good to be true,” said he ; “it is not possible.”

Then Madame Catherine gave us some milk to help us to eat them. At last M. Christopher laid down his spoon and said—

“Enough, Jean, enough ; one might over-eat oneself, they are so good.”

We were all of the same opinion.

Before he left the curé would see our bit of land ; he made Chauvel explain to him how these Hanoverian roots were cultivated, and when he told him that they grew still better in the sandy soil of the hills than in the strong land of the valley, he cried—

“Listen, Chauvel; when you brought these cuttings in your basket, and you, Jean, when you planted them, in spite of the folly of the capucins and other silly people, you did more for our country than all the monks in the three bishoprics have done for ages past. These roots will be the poor man’s bread!”

He then told Maître Jean to keep some seed for him, saying he would grow it in his garden to set an example, that in two or three years half the parish lands should be planted with it. And then he set off for Phalsbourg.

And this is the manner in which potatoes first came into our country. I thought the peasants would be glad to know this. Next year my godfather planted his square field on the hillside with it, and had a crop of more than sixty sacks; but a report having been spread that potatoes were a cause of leprosy, no one would buy them but Letumier of Les Baraques and two labourers up in the mountain. Fortunately, the following spring we read in the gazettes that a brave man named Parmentier had planted these roots in the neighbourhood of Paris, that he had sent some to the king, and that his majesty had eaten them! Then everybody wanted them; and Maître Leroux, who had been very much put out by the people’s folly, in return sold them the seed very dear.

V.

It is from this period that I date my existence. The man who knows nothing, and is without means of instruction, goes through the world like a beast of burden ; he works for others, he helps to increase the wealth of others, and when he becomes weak and worn out, they get rid of him.

My father called me every morning as soon as it was light ; my brothers and sisters were still asleep. I dressed without noise, and I left with my little bag, my feet in my sabots, a waggoner's large cap drawn over my ears, and my log of wood under my arm. Winter was just beginning, and it was cold. I shut the door carefully, and I set off breathing on my fingers.

How all comes back to me, after so many years ! the up and down path, the leafless old trees by the side of the road, the wintry stillness in the forest, and Lutzelbourg at the bottom of the valley, with its pointed church spire, its weathercock against the grey sky, the little graveyard at the foot of it, the tombstones buried in snow ; the old houses, the river, Father Sirvius's mill splashing the stream as it flows along. Is it possible that what happens in infancy remains always fixed in one's recollection, while the rest is so soon obliterated ?

I was almost always first at school. There were no boys in the room. The mother of M. le Curé Chris-

topher, a very little, bent, and shrivelled-up woman, her red linen petticoat up to the middle of her back, in the Alsatian fashion, her cap like a pad on the nape of her neck, Madame Madeleine, lively as a mouse, had already lighted the fire. I put my log of wood down by the stove, and my sabots under it, to dry them. I see it all now: the whitewashed beams, the rows of little benches, the large black table against the wall between the two windows; at the end of the room the curé's desk in a little alcove, and above it a large crucifix.

Every boy swept out the schoolroom in turn, but I used to begin while waiting for the others. They came from Hullenhausen, the Baraques, and even from Chèvrehof. It was there I made the acquaintance of all my old comrades: Louis Frossard, the mayor's son—he died young, during the Revolution; Aloie Clement, who was killed by a grape-shot at Valmy—he was already lieutenant in '92; Dominique Clausse, who set up later as cabinet-maker, at Saverne; François Mayer, master tailor in the 6th Hussars—in 1820 he left the service, said to be rich, but I cannot say it for a fact; Antoine Thomas, who commanded a battalion of the Old Guard. What a number of times he came to see me after 1815! We used to repeat our old stories together. I gave him the best bedroom upstairs; Jacques Messier, chief surveyor of rivers and forests; Hubert Perrin, postmaster at Héming; and fifty others, who would never have been anything but for the Revolution.

Before '89 the cobbler's son remained a cobbler, the woodcutter's son a woodcutter: there was no chance of a rise. After thirty or forty years, there you were in the same place, doing the same thing, perhaps thinner,

perhaps fatter, that was all. But now one's courage and sense can raise one; one need never despair; the son of a poor peasant, if blessed with courage and ability, may rise to rule France.

Let us, then, praise the Lord for having lightened our darkness, and let us be glad in this happy change.

To return to my old comrades at school. They are now all gone. Last year we were but two, Joseph Broussousse, a hatter at Phalsbourg, and myself. When I went there to buy a straw hat in the spring, fat Broussousse would know my voice again, and come, drawing one leg after him, calling out—

“Ha! that's Michel Bastien!”

It was absolutely necessary to go into the back shop and help him to drink a bottle of his old Burgundy, and at the end Broussousse never failed to say as we parted at the door—

“I say, Michel, listen—when I get my passport you will have to get the visa for your own—ha! ha! ha!”

How he laughed!

Poor Broussousse! last autumn they buried him, and for all he used to tell me, I don't intend to apply for my passport just yet. This story has to be finished first, and then I must make up another, just to take up my time. There is no hurry—there is always time enough to go for good.

Well, it was at M. Christopher's that I first knew all these old friends, and many more whose names may occur to me later. As eight struck they came in one after the other, crying, “Good morning, good morning, Mr. Christopher.”

If he was not there they called out all the same; they crowded laughing round the stove. But the

moment they heard the long strides of the curé in the passage, they were all still. Every one seated himself on the bench, his slate on his knees and his nose bent over it, scarcely breathing, for, to tell the truth, M. Christopher liked neither noise nor disputes. I have seen him more than once when up at class the boys would elbow one another, quietly get up, take them up from their bench by the collar, and throw them outside the door like kittens. They did not care to begin again, and they shook in their shoes if he looked hard at them.

The curé came in; at the door he looked to see if everything was in order. You could hear the fire burning—nothing stirred! Then he stood up at his desk and cried, “Go on!” and we all together began to sing, B, A, BA. That went on for some time; at last he called out, “Halt!” and all was silent.

Then he would call on us all in turn, “Jacques, Michel, Nicolas, come here!” We went up to him cap in hand.

“Who created you, and placed you in this world?”

“God!”

“Why did God create you and place you in this world?”

“To worship Him, to love Him, to serve Him, and so to obtain eternal life.”

It was a very good method of teaching; and only through hearing the others answer, at the end of three months I knew nearly all my catechism.

He also made us say our lessons by question and answer; about eleven he used to go down behind the benches and lean over to see that we were learning; while we were spelling in a low tone, he would pinch one's ear gently, and say—

"That's right—you will get on!"

Every time he said that to me I lost breath, and my eyes dimmed with pleasure. Once he even said to me—

"You may tell Jean Leroux that I am very well satisfied with you. Give him this message."

That day I should not have cared to call the *échevins* or the governor himself cousin; still I said nothing about it to Maître Jean—I was afraid of the sin of pride.

By the beginning of March I could read. Unfortunately, Jean could not keep me doing nothing all the year, and with the return of spring I was again down in the pastures. But I had my catechism in my bag, and while my goats were climbing about the rocks, quietly seated on a tuft of heather, in the shade of a beech or an oak, I learned over again what the *curé* had taught us.

Thus, instead of forgetting what I had learned, like the Hultenhausen, Chèvrehof, and other boys, I knew it still better at the close of autumn, and M. Christopher at the beginning of winter removed me into the class of the well-to-do boys of Lutzelbourg, who went to school all the year round. I learned all there then was to learn in our villages—to read, write, and do a few sums—and on the 15th of March, 1781, I received the communion for the first time. Here my studies came to an end; I knew as much as Maître Jean; the rest would come of itself if I worked with a will.

From this time my godfather took me entirely into the forge; he put his cattle in charge of old Yéri, the town herdsman; I still looked after them in the stable, but I was learning a trade at the same time, and

some months after, having gained strength, I became third hammerman.

Madame Catherine and Nicole were kind to me, for in the evening, when the forge fire had tired Maître Jean's eyes, it was I who read the gazettes and little books of all sorts brought us by Chauvel. I read them without understanding much about them. For instance, when the paper spoke of the crown rights, of state provinces, and provinces of election, I sweated blood and water, as they say, but I could not get the sense of that into my head. I saw clearly enough that money was to be given to the king, but I could not understand in what way it was to be raised from us.

In everything relating to our country it was another thing. When the paper spoke of the gabelles, as I used to go every week to buy salt in town for the house, at six sous a pound, which would be more than twelve sous now, I fancy I heard the salt-dealer at his wicket crying out at some poor devil—

“You were not here last Tuesday. You are buying smuggled salt. I've got my eye on you—take care what you are about.”

For not only were we obliged to buy our salt at the office of the gabelle, at a price much above its value, but also to take so much a head, and weekly.

When it was a question of tithes I could see the tithe-collector, with his pole and his carts, calling out in the fields, “Mind the eleventh.”

For then, even when the weather was likely to be bad or stormy, we were obliged to put the sheaves in a line, and the collector came so slowly, and stuck his pitchfork into the finest before your face, to add to the heap he had already.

That was intelligible enough.

I also understood about the duties on drinkables, the thirteenthths on sales, turnpike tolls, market dues on all sorts of goods, indirect taxes, tariff duties, excise, city tolls, &c. &c. I could comprehend the octroi, the markets, the town-hall, the sworn comptrollers, stampers, gaugers, police, wine-inspectors, brandy, beer, and food testers, sworn salesmen, appraisers, sworn inspectors of weights and measures, of wine, and meat markets, and thousands of other officials coming, going, touching, examining, opening, unpacking, arresting, scolding, and confiscating: all that I understood very well; Chauvel explained the rest.

“You want to know what is an ‘election province,’” said he, sitting quietly behind the stove. “It is not difficult to understand, Michel. An ‘election province’ is an old province of France, one of the first, as Paris, Soissons, Orleans, where the first kings existed. In those provinces the king’s lieutenants are everything and do everything; they impose what taxes they like, and no one dares either to defraud them or to complain. Any appeals from them are returned to them, and they sit in judgment upon them! In former times these provinces named their own assessors. They laid on their load as lightly as they could; they called these assessors ‘elected,’ and thence the term ‘election province;’ but for the last two hundred years the assessors have been appointed by the lord-lieutenants; that suited them better.” (With a wink.) “Do you see that, Michel?”

“Yes, Master Chauvel.”

“Well, in the ‘dominion,’ or conquered provinces, as our country of Lorraine, Alsace, Brittany, and Burgundy, it is different. Here the lieutenants are not everything;

the nobles and the bishops hold provincial assemblies from time to time; they vote the supplies, first for the share of the province in the expenditure of the whole kingdom, what they call 'the free gift, the king's part!' then for their own expenditure, for their roads, waterways, public buildings, &c. Before surrendering, our provinces made terms for themselves. The nobles and bishops of our provinces know what they are about; they have had their capitulation, and have saved their endowments and their privileges. As for poor devils like ourselves, we pay; that is our right, and of that right no one will attempt to deprive us. We pay now not only as formerly the expenses of our provinces, but since the capitulation we pay the king's taxes in addition; that is what our profit consists in—do you see, Michel?"

"Yes."

"Then try and remember it."

Maître Jean was furious.

"It is not just," said he, striking the table with his great fist; "it is not just. Are we all French alike, or are we not? Are we of the same blood—of the same race? Why do some always vote the taxes, and why do others always pay them? Ought not the profit and the loss to be shared alike?"

"Without doubt," said Chauvel, "and turnpikes, and taxes, and royal aids, and *corvées*, and all these charges which now weigh down the poor only, while the nobility, the convents, and even citizens who are seeking to ennoble themselves, contribute nothing or nearly so; all that is unjust also! But of what use is it to talk about it? We cannot change it."

He never flew into a passion. I remember often hearing him tell the story of the sufferings of his fore-

fathers with calmness—how they had been hunted from La Rochelle; how they were robbed of lands, houses, and money; how driven by persecution across the whole extent of France, their children forced from them to be brought up Catholics; how, at Lixheim, dragoons had been sent to convert them at the sword's point; how his father had fled into the woods of the Graufthal, whither the mother and children had followed him the next day, giving up everything rather than their religion; how his grandfather had been sent to the galleys at Dunkirk for thirteen years, chained by the leg to the bench of rowers night and day, with a scoundrel for boatswain, who beat them so brutally that many of these Calvinists died; how these wretched galley-slaves could see the English point their great guns, loaded up to the muzzle, point-blank at their bench, without the power of stirring—could see the linstock applied; and how, after the storm of balls, grape, and canister had passed, their mangled legs were torn from the chain, and they were thrown into the sea to clear the ship! He used to tell us these stories, which made us shudder, taking a pinch of snuff from the hollow of his hand; while little Margaret with her great black eyes looked at him in silence.

He always wound up by saying—

“Yes! this is what the Chauvels owe the Bourbons, the great Louis XIV., the well-beloved Louis XV. Ours is a strange story, is it not? Even now I myself am fit for nothing; I have no civil existence. Our good king, like all others, when he mounted the throne, surrounded by his bishops and his archbishops, swore to exterminate us. ‘I swear to do my best sincerely and with all my might to exterminate all heretics mentioned

as condemned by the Church in all countries subject to my rule !' Your curés, who ought to do it for every Frenchman, refuse to register our births, marriages, or deaths. The law incapacitates us from being judges, counsellors, or schoolmasters. We can only stray about the world like animals ; we are deprived beforehand of all resources by which men live ; and nevertheless we do no harm ; you are all obliged to confess we are honest, respectable——"

Maître Jean replied—

"It is abominable, Chauvel, but Christian charity——"

"Christian charity ! we have always had it," said he, "fortunately for our tormentors. If we had not had Christian charity ! But it will all be paid with compound interest ! It must be paid ! if not in one year, it will in ten ; if not in ten years, it will in a hundred—it will all be paid."

It will be seen from this that Chauvel, unlike Maître Jean, would not have been satisfied with alleviating or mitigating either the taxes or the militia laws. Only to look at his pale complexion, his bright little black eyes, his small hooked nose, thin lips always compressed, his back slightly bent from carrying the bale of books, and his slender limbs strong as wire—only to look at him, one saw that man would have all or none. He has patience to obtain it. He would brave the galleys to sell the books which contain his opinions ; he fears nothing, and trusts nothing. If he gets a chance I should not like to be against him. And his little girl is already just like him—you may break but you will never bend her.

I cannot say I made these reflections, I was too young, but I felt it, and greatly respected Chauvel. I used to

take off my cap to him, and say, "He wishes well to the peasants—we agree in that."

At that time our gazettes spoke of a deficit; often my godfather would say he could not comprehend what caused this deficit; the country always paid its taxes; it was never excused a farthing, and had no credit given it; the taxes were continually increasing; therefore this deficit showed there were robbers somewhere; our good king should find out these robbers; they could not be among us, since, the money once raised, the peasants never saw a liard of it again. Therefore the conclusion was that the robbers were about the king.

Valentine would then hold up his hands, and say—

"Maître Jean! what are you thinking of? About the king are only princes, dukes, barons, bishops, people the soul of honour, who prefer by far glory to wealth."

"All right," Maître Jean would say roughly; "think as you like, and I shall think as I like. You will never make me believe that peasants, workpeople, and even citizens, who have nothing to do with money but to pay it, are the cause of this deficit. To steal one must be near the treasure; therefore, if the princes do not steal, their servants do."

Jean was right, for before the Revolution the nation could not send deputies to inspect the accounts; the seigneurs and bishops had all in their own hands; they, then, were alone responsible.

But it is a fact, no one seemed to be sure of this deficit; people used to talk about it, and so did the gazettes, but in an indirect manner, when the king appointed one Necker, a Genevese, minister; this man, like merchants who do not want to be bankrupt, had

the idea of drawing up a statement of the finances of all France, on one side the income, on the other the expenditure. The gazettes called that M. Necker's statement (*compte rendu*).

It was the first time for centuries past that the peasants had been told how their money went, because accounting for money to those who pay it is a merchant's idea; and the seigneurs, the abbés, and the monks were too proud and too holy to entertain such a one.

When I think of M. Necker's statement it seems a dream. Every evening Maître Jean discussed it; the American war, Washington, Rochambeau, Lafayette, the naval battles in India, all were laid aside for this statement, which he used to study, and then lift up his hands and groan out, "The king's and queen's household, so much! the prince's household, so much! Swiss regiments, so much! pay of receivers, farmers, paymasters, administrators, so much! religious societies, houses and buildings, so much! pension-list, so much! and all in millions."

I never saw a man so angry.

"Now," he would say, "I see where our misery springs from; why people go barefooted; why so many thousands perish from cold and hunger; why so much soil lies waste. Yes, now I see it all. God in heaven! must these wretched creatures pay five hundred millions every year to the king, and it is not enough! is there still a deficit of fifty-six millions?"

It made one ill to look at his face.

"Well, it is very hard," said Chauvel, "but you must also consider it a great thing to know where our money goes. Formerly one asked, 'Where does all this money go? what is done with it? is it thrown into the sea?'

Now, though we still pay all costs and exactions, we know what becomes of it."

Then Maître Jean got angry, and said—

"You are right! it is very pleasant to know it. I work that M. de Soubise may have a palace bought for him. I deprive myself of everything that Monseigneur the Count d'Artois may give *fêtes* which cost two hundred thousand livres. I break my back from morning till night that the queen may grant to the first noble mendicant that applies to her ten times as much as I ever earned in my life; that must certainly be very pleasant!"

All the same, the idea that we should have an account of our expenditure published pleased him, and when his anger was once over, he said—

"We have not had such an honest minister since Turgot. M. Necker is an honest man; he follows out the other's ideas, who also endeavoured to relieve the people, diminish the taxes, abolish the wardenships, and account for the money. The great seigneurs and the bishops forced him to resign. It is to be hoped they will not be able to do the same with Necker, and that our good king will stand by him! Now those who ruin us will be somewhat ashamed of themselves; they will never dare to keep up their frightful expenditure. When they pass a poor labouring man they will not be able to help blushing with shame, to see themselves despised by him; they will think he has read the statement of M. Necker; he knows that their feathers, and horses, and carriages, and lacqueys are wrung from his exertions, and that they are got by begging."

What gave Maître Jean still greater pleasure was that M. Necker at the end of his statement declared

that the privileges of the convents and the seigneurs ought to be abolished, and they should be required to pay the same taxes as the peasants.

"This is the best of all," said he. "M. Necker has very great views."

The report of some great change spread all over the country; the good news was carried everywhere. For more than three weeks Chauvel and his little daughter Margaret were not seen in the village, and all that time they spent in selling the statement of M. Necker. They fetched them from Pont-à-Mousson for Lorraine, and from Kehl for Alsace. I forget how many of these pamphlets they sold. Margaret told me once, but so many years have passed since.

On market-days you heard nothing talked of but the abolition of privileges and equality of taxation.

"Well, Maître Jean, it seems at last our good seigneurs and abbés will have to pay something?"

"Yes, Nicolas—yes, this rascally deficit has got this for us. The usual taxes are no longer sufficient—the people would never be able to make this deficit good. It is terrible—terrible! What a misfortune!"

And then they laughed; they had a pinch of snuff, and pitied these poor seigneurs and unfortunate monks.

This took place in '81; but confidence was not of long duration. We soon learned that Count d'Artois, Queen Marie Antoinette, and the old minister Maurepas could not endure this citizen minister, who wanted to furnish accounts. Uneasiness increased; we suspected something, and the 2nd of June, one Friday, Maître Jean having sent me to buy salt at the office, I found all the city in commotion.

The band of the Regiment de Brie was playing under the balcony of the Marquis de Talaru. Drums were beating before the hotel of the prévôt and the house of the major; they marched about as on Christmas-day, and these drummers were well treated to drink. It was quite a *fête*. But the people were quiet. The dealers in poultry and vegetables, sitting on their stools in a row, did not shout out as usual. One only heard the band in the square, and the drums about the streets.

Before the salt bureau there was a great crowd. Young officers called cadets, their little hats on one side and a knot of ribbons on the arm, paraded three and four together, laughing and playing the fool. The salt-officer counted my money, handed me the bag over the wicket, and off I went.

At a corner of the market some grain-dealers were talking together.

"It is all over," said one of these men. "It is all over. The king has dismissed him."

It immediately occurred to me that Necker was dismissed, as we had talked of no one else for the last three months. I hurried home to Baraques. The old soldiers on guard at the Gate d'Allemagne were smoking their pipes and quietly playing at cards as usual.

When I reached our forge Maître Jean knew it all from the dealers who were returning from town. They were still there, talking over what they had heard. Godfather cried—

"It is not possible!—not possible! If M. Necker goes, who is to provide for the deficit? The others will go on as usual—giving *fêtes*, hunting parties, and amusements: they will squander the money as they

have done hitherto; and the deficit instead of being diminished will be increased. I say it is not possible."

But when I told him what I had seen, the delight of the cadets, the band before the governor's hotel, and all that, he bent his bushy eyebrows.

"Well, I suppose it is true, and the good man goes! I did, however, hope that the king would have supported him."

He would have gone on in this strain, but we did not know all the people who were at the door looking at and listening to us. He seized on his hammer and cried out to us—

"Come, let us work! We have to pay the pension of Soubise! Now then, boys!"

He laughed so loud that they heard him in the inn opposite, and Dame Catherine leaned out to see what was the matter.

The dealers left, and many more passed that day much cast down. No further remark was made; but in the evening, with door and shutters closed, Jean opened his heart:—

"M. the Count d'Artois and our lovely queen have carried their point. Woe to the man who allows himself to be led by an extravagant woman; he may possess all possible good qualities, love his people, abolish *corvées* and the torture; but *fêtes*, dances, and all sorts of pleasures and amusements he cannot prevent. On this head an extravagant woman listens to nothing, and will hear nothing; destruction may come upon everything, but *fêtes* must be given—for that object was she sent into the world! She cannot do without compliments, bouquets, and sweet scents. Look at that poor notary Regonie, a man well to do, a man whom father

grandfather, and relations had all helped to enrich, and who could have lived quietly to a hundred. Well, unluckily, he marries Madame Jeannette Desjardin: he is forced to run about to parties, weddings, christenings; his horse is in harness from morning till night. Well, at the end of five or six years the bailiffs walk into the house, they sell land and furniture, poor Regonie is sent to the galleys, and Madame Jeannette follows the Chevalier de Bazin, of the Rouergue regiment, about the world. That is the conduct of an extravagant woman, and that is the end of such people at last."

The more Maître Jean talked, the more angry he became; he dared not assert that our queen, Marie-Antoinette, would draw us all into trouble, but his face showed that he thought so; his speeches would last more than half-an-hour; there was no end to his talking. Out of doors the rain fell and the wind blew; it was a very bad day altogether.

But we had to feel another great fright, and to hear more bad news, for, after nine, just as Nicole was making up the fire, and I was throwing a sack over my shoulders to run home in, two loud knocks were heard on the shutters.

Maître Jean had talked so loud that some one might have heard him through the wind and rain. We looked at one another without stirring, and Catherine carried the lamp into the kitchen, that they might think we were in bed; the idea of two police-sergeants at the door turned us all pale, when a loud voice began calling outside the door—

"It is I, Jean! it is Christopher; open the door!"

Fancy what a relief it was to us.

Maitre Jean went into the passage, and Catherine brought the lamp back.

"Is it you?" said Jean.

"Yes, it is I."

"What a fright you gave us!"

They came in almost directly afterwards. It was easy to see that the curé was not in a good humour, for instead of noticing Dame Catherine, and every one, as he always did, without paying attention to any one, he shook the rain off his great hat, and said—

"I come from Saverne—I have seen this famous Cardinal de Rohan. God in heaven! can he be a cardinal, a prince of the Church? When I think of it——"

He seemed irritated; the rain ran off his cheeks into the collar of his cassock; he pulled off his bands and put them in his pocket, as he strode up and down. We looked at him with astonishment; he did not seem to see us, and spoke only to Maitre Jean.

"Yes, I have seen this prince," cried he, "this great dignitary, who ought to show us an example of good morals and of all Christian virtues. I saw him drive his carriage at a gallop up the high street of Saverne, over the crockery and pots and pans spread out for sale, laughing like a lunatic. What a disgrace!"

"You know Necker is dismissed?" observed Maitre Jean.

"Do I not know it?" said he, smiling with an air of contempt. "Have I not just seen all the superiors of convents in Alsace, the capucins, barefooted friars, Carmelites, all the mendicant and sandalled priesthood file by in state in his eminence's ante-rooms? Ha! ha!"

He paced the room again. He was covered with mud up to his shoulders, he was soaked with rain to his bones, but he seemed not to feel it; his grizzled grey head shook while he talked, as it were, to himself.

“Yes, Christopher, yes, such are the princes of the Church! Go and ask the favour of monseigneur for the poor father of a family; go and complain to him who ought to be the support of his clergy; go and complain to him that the officials of the Exchequer had invaded your parsonage on pretence of looking for smuggled goods, and that you had been forced to deliver up to them the keys of your cellars and of your cupboards; tell him it is disgraceful to compel any citizen whatever to open his door, day or night, to armed men wearing no uniform by which they could be distinguished from bandits; whose oath is believed in a court of justice! When appointed to exercise their functions, no inquiries allowed to be made as to their morals or previous life; and on the hazard of their word the fortune, honour, and, sometimes, lives of persons are dependent. Tell him it is his duty to lay these just complaints at the foot of the throne, and to release a poor wretch dragged to prison because the salt officers had found on him four pounds of salt! Go! go! and see how you will be received, Christopher!”

“But in the name of heaven,” said Jean, “what has happened?”

He stood still for two minutes and told us—

“I went there to complain of a domiciliary visit which the officers of the gabelle had made in my village last night at eleven o’clock, and of the arrest of one of my parishioners, Jacob Baumgarten. It was

my duty to do so. I thought a cardinal would have understood that, that he would have pitied the unfortunate father of six children whose only crime was to have bought a few pounds of contraband salt, and that he would cause him to be released. Well, I was, in the first place, obliged to remain two hours at the door of this splendid château, into which the capucins walked as if they were at home, and then, when I was allowed to enter this Babylon, where the vanity of silk, gold, and precious stones displayed itself everywhere and in everything!—well, they let me wait there from eleven in the morning till five in the evening with the poor curés from the mountain.

“We could hear the lacqueys laughing. We could see from time to time one tall fellow in a scarlet livery at the door, who looked at us and called to the others, ‘The parsons are still there!’ I waited with patience, for I wanted to see monseigneur, when one of these fellows came and told us that the audiences of monseigneur were deferred for a week. The scoundrel laughed at us.”

As he said that the curé broke his holly-stick as easily as a match; his face was terrible to look at.

“The gallows-bird deserves to have been thrashed,” said Maître Jean.

“If we had been alone I should have taken him by the ears then,” answered the curé. “But there it is. I have made a sacrifice of my mortification to the Lord.”

Then he walked up and down again. We were all grieved for him. Madame Catherine set bread and wine before him; he ate standing, and became suddenly calm. But he said things I shall never forget; he said—

“Everywhere justice is put to shame. The people do everything, and the others can only be insolent; they tread virtue under foot, they sneer at religion! The poor man’s son protects them, the poor man’s son feeds them, and it is a poor man’s son, like myself, who has to preach respect for their wealth, their dignities, and even for their offences! How long shall this endure? I cannot tell; but this I know, it cannot endure for ever. It is against nature; it is against the will of God. Is it a conscientious act to preach respect for what is shameful? This must come to an end, for it is written, ‘Those who keep My commandments shall enter into My mansion, but the lewd, the idolaters, and liars shall remain without, who love falsehood and do it.’”

The same evening M. Christopher returned to his village. We were all sad, and Maître Jean said to us before separating—

“All these nobles acknowledge their own existence only. When forced to make use of one of us, either as priest, workman, or soldier, they mortify him and get rid of him as soon as possible. Well, they are wrong, and now that the deficit is known, things will change. It is known that the money flows from the people, and the people will become tired of working for princes and cardinals like this.”

I went home to our cottage after ten, and these ideas haunted me in my sleep. I thought as thought Jean, Chauvel, and the curé; but the time was not yet come: we had still much to suffer before our deliverance was attained.

VI.

IN the middle of all these stories about Necker, the queen, and the Count d'Artois, what causes the saddest recollection is the state of want of my parents, always at work, and always falling short of food in winter. Etienne had grown—the poor child worked with father, but was always weak and ailing—he could hardly earn enough to feed him; Claude was herdsman at the Tiercelin convent at Lixheim, Nicolas was at work in the forest as woodcutter; he was a workman, but he was fond of tippling and fighting in the wine-shops on Sundays, and hardly gave his mother anything. My sisters, Lisbeth and little Marceline, waited on the officers and town ladies at Tivoli, but that was but once a week; on Sundays and the rest of the week they begged on the high road, for there were then no manufactories; they did not knit those fine woollen hoods, jackets, and puffs in our villages, nor did they plait those thousands of straw hats which are now sent to Paris, Germany, Italy, and America; children often reached the age of eighteen or twenty without having earned a penny.

But, worst of all, our debt went on increasing; it already exceeded nine crowns of six livres, and M. Robin knocked at our window regularly every three months to tell father he must do such and such a

corvée—this was our nightmare—all our other ills were small by comparison. We did not know that owing to the system of farmers-general, of tolls and taxes, we were made to pay for life's necessities ten times as much as they were worth ; for a piece of bread we paid the price of a loaf, for a pound of salt the price of ten, and so on, which was our ruin.

We did not know that at a distance of twenty-five leagues, in Switzerland, with the same amount of labour, we could have lived better and put money by as well. No, poor peasants never understood indirect taxation ; whatever is asked from them in coin at the close of the year, if only twenty sous, disgusts them ; but if they knew what they paid for daily necessities, they would cry out in another fashion.

There is nothing of that now : the barriers are withdrawn, and the officials cut down to a quarter of their number ; but in those days what robbery and what distress !

How I longed to be able to relieve my parents ! how I comforted myself by thinking—

“Next year Maître Jean will give me three livres a month, and so we shall be able to pay off our debt little by little !”

Yes, this idea gave me double strength. I dreamed of it day and night.

At last, after suffering so much, one piece of good fortune happened to us. Nicolas in drawing for the militia drew a white ticket. At that time, instead of being numbered, the tickets were white or black—black tickets only had to go.

What good luck !

The idea of selling Nicolas immediately came into

my mother's head; he was five feet six inches (French) high; he was fit for the grenadiers. That would be more than nine crowns.

All my life long I shall see the joy of our family. Mother held Nicolas by the arm, and said to him—

“Now we can sell you! Many married men are forced to serve in the militia. You can take the place of one of them.”

It was only married men who were allowed substitutes, but you had to serve double the time—twelve years instead of six! Nicolas knew that as well as his mother, but he answered all the same—

“Just as you like. I am quite satisfied.”

Father would have preferred keeping him; he said that by cutting wood in the forest, and doing *corvée* work in winter, he could earn money and pay his debts; but mother took him aside, and whispered to him—

“Listen, Jean-Pierre! If Nicolas stays here he will get married. I know he is looking after little Jeannette Lorisse. They will marry and have a family, and that will be worst of all for us.”

Father then asked, with his eyes full of tears—

“You want to be a substitute, Nicolas; you want to leave us?”

And Nicolas, with a bit of red ribbon in his old cocked hat, cried—

“Yes, I'll go! I ought to pay the debt! I am the eldest. It is I who will pay the debt.”

He was a good fellow. Our mother threw both her arms round his neck, kissed him, and told him she knew he loved his parents, she knew it long ago; and that he would come back to his village in a white coat with a sky-blue collar and a feather in his hat.

"All right! all right!" replied Nicolas. He saw through our mother's plans, who was only thinking of her family, but he made believe to notice nothing; besides, he was ready for war.

Our father sat crying by the hearth with his head in his hands. He would have liked to have kept his whole family by him; but mother leaned over his shoulder, and while the rest of the family were crying at the door and disturbing the neighbours, she murmured in his ear—

"Listen! We shall have more than nine great crowns. Nicolas has six inches to spare, and they will be paid for extra; that will come to twelve louis! We can buy a cow; we shall have milk, butter, and cheese; we shall be able to fatten a pig."

He made no reply, but was sad all day.

However, next day they went to the town together, and in spite of his sorrow father said that Nicolas would be a substitute for the son of the baker Josse, that he would have to serve twelve years, and that we should get twelve louis—a louis for each year's service; that Robin should be paid first, and then we should see what to do.

He wanted to give Nicolas a louis or two; but mother said he wanted nothing, that he would be well fed once a day, that he would be well clothed; he would have stockings to his feet like all the militia, and if he had money in his pocket, he would spend it in the wine-shop and get punished.

Nicolas laughed and said—

"Well, well, so be it."

Father alone was grieved. But you must not suppose that mother was glad to see Nicolas go. No,

she loved him a good deal; but great misery hardens the heart; she thought of the younger ones, of Marceline and Etienne: in those days twelve louis were a fortune.

So the affair was settled: the papers were to be signed at the town-hall in the course of the week. Nicolas set off for the town, and of course, as he was to be the substitute of the son of the house, Father Josse, who kept the inn called the Great Stag, opposite the German gate, treated him to sausages and choucroute; nor did he refuse him a glass of good wine. Nicolas passed his time in laughing and singing with his comrades, who were substitutes for other townspeople. I worked on with more courage than ever, for at last Robin would have his money, and we should be freed from that rascal. I struck the anvil with pleasure, and Maître Jean, Valentine, and all the household understood my satisfaction.

One morning as the sparks were flying right and left under the hammer, there suddenly appeared in the doorway a strapping fellow six feet high, a corporal in the Royal Allemand regiment, his large cocked hat stuck over his ear, the coat buttoned, a chamois-coloured vest, yellow leather breeches, and long boots up to his knees, his sword belted round his waist; and he begins to call out—

“Good morning, cousin Jean; good morning.”

He was as grand as a colonel. Maître Jean first looked at him with surprise, and then he said—

“Oh, it’s you, is it, you rascal? You are not hanged yet?”

The other began to laugh, and cried—

Always the same, cousin Jean—always joking. Won't you pay for a bottle of Rikewir?"

"When I work it is not to wet the whistle of a fellow like you," said Maître Jean, turning his back on him. "Go on, boys, work away."

And while we went on hammering the corporal laughed and walked off, trailing his sabre.

He was really Maître Jean's cousin—his cousin Jerome, from Quatre-Vents; but he had been in so many scrapes before he enlisted that his family no longer noticed him. This fellow had come home on leave; and why I mention him is because next day when I went to buy salt I heard some one call out at the corner of the market—

"Michel! Michel!"

I look round and I see Nicolas with this fellow before the Bear tavern at the entrance to Cœur-Rouge-lane. Nicolas takes me by the arm and says—

"You must have a drop."

"Let us go to Josse," said I.

"I have had enough choucroute," said he. "Come."

And when I said something about money the other struck in with—

"Never mind that; I like a fellow-countryman—that's my business."

I was obliged to go in and drink.

Old Ursula brought whatever they called for—wine, brandy, cheese. But I had no time to lose, and this den full of soldiers and militia smoking, crying, and singing together, did not please me either. Another Baraquin, little Jean Kat, the clarionette-player, was with us, and he too was drinking at the Royal Alle-

mand's expense. Two or three old soldiers, veterans, their wigs pushed back, hats on one side, nose, eyes, and the whole face covered with red patches, were sitting at the table leaning on their elbows, and black pipes between the stumps of their teeth. They thee and thou'd Nicolas, who returned it. Two or three times I saw them wink to the Royal Allemand, and when Nicolas said anything they laughed, and cried—

“Ha! ha! ha! that's it.”

I could not understand it. I was surprised that the other paid for everything.

Outside, the rappel was being beaten at the infantry barracks. The Swiss soldiers of Schénau's regiment went running by; they had relieved the De Brie regiment some days since. All these Swiss wore red coats, and the French soldiers white. But the old soldiers who were paid-off veterans belonged to no regiment, so they did not leave the tavern.

The Royal Allemand asked me how old I was; he said nothing more to me.

Nicolas began to sing, but I, seeing more people continually coming in, took my bag from under the bench, and I made haste home to Baraques.

This happened the day before the papers were to be signed at the town-hall. This night Nicolas did not come home to sleep. My father was uneasy when I told him what I had seen. My mother said—

“It's nothing; boys must have pleasure. Nicolas can no longer come back to us every day; he had better make the most of his time, and amuse himself, since others pay for it.”

But my father was thoughtful; my mother and sisters had been long asleep; my mother went up the ladder,

and left us alone by the hearth ; my father said nothing—he was thinking ; at last, very late, he said—

“ Let us go to bed, Michel, and try to sleep. To-morrow morning early I will see after him. The sooner this business is over the better. I must sign, as I promised.”

He went up the ladder, and I was undressing, when we heard some one come to our cottage from the garden lane. My father went down, and said—

“ Here is Nicolas.”

He opened the door, but instead of Nicolas it was little Jean Kat, very pale, who said—

“ Listen ; don’t be frightened ; but a misfortune has happened.”

“ What is it ?” cried my father, trembling.

“ Your Nicolas is in the town prison. He has nearly killed big Jerome, of the Royal Allemand, with a jug. I told him to take care, and do as I do ; for the last three years I drink at the expense of the kidnappers ; they all want to catch me, but I won’t sign—I leave them to pay, but I never sign.”

“ Oh, my God !” said my father, “ how many ills fall on us !”

I could not keep quiet ; I was sitting by the hearth. My mother got up—they were all awake.

“ What has he signed ?” asked my father ; “ tell us what. He could not sign, since Josse had our promise. He could not do it.”

“ Well,” said Jean Kat, “ it was neither his fault nor mine. We had had too much. The recruiting-sergeants told him to sign ; I made signs to him not to do it, but he could not see distinctly, he was too far gone. I was obliged to go out for a moment, and when I returned

he had signed. The Royal Allemand had already pocketed the paper with a laugh. I took Nicolas into the kitchen, and I asked him if he had signed. 'Yes.' 'Then instead of twelve louis you will only get one hundred livres; you have let them cheat you!' Then he goes back in a rage, and tells the others that the paper must be torn up. The Royal Allemand laughs at him. Well, I can only tell you that your Nicolas upset everything; he had the Royal Allemand and one veteran by the cravat. Everything shook in the house. The old woman called for the guard. I was shut in between the table and the wall. I could do nothing; I could not get away. Jerome drew his sword, but Nicolas took a jug and gave him such a blow on the head with it that it was broken in pieces, and that rascal Royal Allemand was stretched at full length by the side of the stove, which was upset, bottles, jugs, and glasses rolling under one's feet. The guard came to the door, and I was just able to get away by the stable at the back into the Rue de la Synagogue. As I turned the corner I saw Nicolas in the middle of the guard near the archway. Market-street was full of people. It was not possible to get near. They said the Royal Allemand was nearly dead! But he had no right to draw his sword; Nicolas was not going to let him kill him. Jerome was to blame in it all; I will swear it if called upon—he was to blame!"

While Jean Kat told us this sad tale, we stood there crushed down, saying nothing, for we had nothing to say; but when mother lifted her hands every one burst into tears. It was my saddest remembrance; not only were we ruined, but Nicolas was in prison.

Had not the city gates been shut my father would

have set off at once, but he was obliged to wait till morning in all this trouble.

Our neighbours, who were already in bed, got up one after the other when they heard our lamentations. As they came Jean Kat repeated the same story, while we sat on the edge of our old box full of leaves, resting our hands on our knees and crying. The rich do not know what misery is. No; it always falls on the poor—everything is against them. At first my mother had blamed Nicolas, but afterwards she was sorry for him and cried about him.

Early in the morning my father took his stick, and was going to start alone; but I made him wait. Maître Jean was getting up, and he might give us good advice, and perhaps he could go with us and try to arrange the matter. We waited till five, when the forge fire was lighted, and set out for the inn. Maître Jean was already up in his shirt-sleeves in the great room. He was much surprised to see us, and when I told him our trouble and begged him to help us, at first he was very angry.

“What can I do in all this?” said he. “Your Nicolas is a tippler, and the other, my big rogue of a cousin, is worse! What is there to be settled? Things must follow their own course; the prévôt must take it in hand. Any way, the best thing that could happen would be to see your scamp of a son off to his regiment, since he has been such a fool as to let them kidnap him.”

He was right; but as my father's tears fell fast, he all on a sudden put on his Sunday coat, took his stick, and said—

“Come, you are a good man, who deserves to be helped, if it be possible, but I have very little hope.”

He told his wife we should be home by nine, and gave his orders to Valentine before the forge. We then set off, very much cast down. From time to time Maître Jean cried—

“What can be done? He made his mark before witnesses, he is five feet six, strong as a box-tree. Do you think they will let off such fools when they allow themselves to be caught? Why, they make the best soldiers; the less brains they have the bolder they are. And the other fellow, that great gallows-bird, would he have had six months’ leave of absence if it was not to entrap our country boys? Don’t you think he would catch it if he did not carry back one or two with him to the regiment Royal Allemand? I don’t see what is to be done.”

The more he talked the sadder we were. However, when we got to the town Maître Jean took courage again.

“Let us go first to the hospital. I know the old director, Jacques Pelletier. We can get leave to see my cousin, and if he will give up the enlistment paper we shall gain everything. Let me try.”

We went along the ramparts till we came in front of the old hospital between the bastion of the Porte de France and that of the Poudrière. Maître Jean rang a bell at the gate, where a sentry stands day and night; a hospital attendant came and opened the door, and my godfather went in, telling us to wait.

The sentinel paced up and down; my father and I, leaning against the garden wall, looked up at the old window in a state of grief which may be easily imagined.

At the end of a quarter of an hour, Maître Jean came back to the door and beckoned us in. The sentry

allowed us to pass, and we entered the great corridor, and then went upstairs, right up to the roof. An attendant went up before us; at the top he opened the door of a room, where Jerome lay in a little bed, his head so covered with bandages that it was difficult to recognise him.

He raised himself on his elbow and looked at us from under his cotton nightcap, throwing his head back.

"Good morning, Jerome," said Maître Jean to him. "I heard of your accident this morning, and I am sorry for it."

Jerome made him no answer; he did not look as proud or as gay as he was two days before.

"Yes," said my godfather, "it was very unlucky; you might have had your skull fractured; but fortunately it won't be anything; the major tells me it will be of no consequence, only you will have to leave off drinking brandy for a fortnight, and you will be all right."

Jerome was still silent. At last he said, as he looked at us—

"You want to ask me something, I know; what is it?"

"Well, cousin, this is what I want. I am glad to see you are not as bad as they said you were," replied Maître Jean; "these poor people come from Baraques; they are the father and brother of Nicolas——"

"Ah! ha! I see," said the rascal, lying down again. "I understand now; they come to ask you for the other fellow's enlistment paper! I would rather have my throat cut. Ah, you thief! you will strike people, will you? you will throttle them, you blackguard! If ever you come into my company I will pay you off for it."

He ground his teeth, and threw the sheets over his shoulders, in order not to see us.

"Listen, Jerome," said Maître Jean.

"Go to the devil!" said the rascal.

Then Maître Jean lost his temper, and said—

"Then you won't give up that paper?"

"Go and hang yourself!" said the vagabond.

The hospital attendant told us to go—his rage might choke him. But before leaving, Maître Jean cried out—

"I thought you good for nothing, cousin; I thought you bad enough when you sold your father's cart and oxen before enlisting; but at this moment I wish you were on your feet all well, to have the pleasure of boxing your ears; you are only worth that."

He would have continued in this strain, but the attendant came and I shut the door; we went downstairs in despair; we had nothing to hope for now.

Once more at the door of the hospital, Maître Jean said to us—

"Well, you see we have lost our time and trouble too. Nicolas will, doubtless, remain in prison till he is sent off to his regiment. He will have to pay all the expenses and damages out of his bounty, and you will get nothing."

Suddenly, in spite of our grief, he began to laugh, and said, wiping his eyes—

"All the same he has punished my cousin well; what a fist! He has marked him as well as if he had done it with the great stamp belonging to the syndie of the drapers."

His laughter was contagious; father said—

"Yes, Nicolas is a powerful fellow; the other is,

perhaps, bigger and has larger bones, but Nicolas is all muscle!"

We laughed, indeed, and then our sorrow became more intense when Maître Jean left the town.

We saw Nicolas in prison the same day. He was lying on straw, and as father cried, he said—

"It can't be helped—it is an accident. I know you will get nothing; but when we can do nothing to change all this we must say 'Thank God.'"

We saw it gave him great pain. When we left we kissed him; he was pale, and asked to see his brothers and sisters, but mother would not let them go.

Three days after Nicolas left for his regiment, the Royal Allemand. He was sitting in a cart with five or six comrades, who had also been fighting and drinking their bounty-money. Dragoons of the *maréchaussée* rode at the sides of the cart. I ran after it, calling out—

"Adieu, Nicolas!—adieu!"

He waved his hat. He had tears in his eyes at leaving his home without seeing father or mother, or any one but myself. That is the way of the world. Father worked every day for our living, and mother could not forgive him. It is true she said later on—

"Poor Nicolas! I ought to have forgiven him at once! He was a good fellow!"

Yes, no doubt he was, but saying so was of no use; he was in the Royal Allemand regiment in garrison at Valenciennes in Flanders, and we were a long time before we heard from him.

VII.

THE folly of Nicolas would have plunged us deeper into want for years to come if Maître Jean had not taken pity on us. The evening of my brother's departure the good man, seeing how I fretted behind the stove, said to me—

“Don't grieve, Michel. I know that usurer Robin has got you all in his clutches; your parents will never be able to pay him; they are too poor. You shall pay him. Though you are not out of your apprenticeship, you shall now get five livres a month. You work well, and I am quite satisfied with your conduct.”

He spoke in earnest. Dame Catherine and Nicole had tears in their eyes; and just as I was replying, “Oh, Maître Jean! You are more than a father to us!” Chauvel, who came in with Margaret at that instant, cried out—

“That is fine! I liked you already, Maître Jean! Now I value you.”

He shook his hand, and then tapping me on the shoulder, he cried—

“Michel, your father asked me to find a situation for your sister Lisbeth. Well, they expect her at the brewery of the Arbre-Vert, at Toussaint's, at Wasscelonne. She will be lodged, fed, get a pair of shoes and two gold crowns a year. We shall see by-and-by

how she gets on with her duties. That is quite enough to begin with."

Fancy my parents' joy when they heard this good news. Lisbeth could not contain herself for delight; she wanted to leave directly, but they had to make a little collection for her in the village, for she had nothing to wear but her every-day rags. Chauvel gave her sabots, Nicole a petticoat, Dame Catherine two chemises, nearly new, Letumier's daughter a bedgown, and her father and mother good advice and their blessing.

Then she kissed us all hurriedly, and took the path to Saverne, which runs through the gardens, stretching her long legs, proud and triumphant, with her little bundle under her arm. We watched her from our door, but she never turned her head; once over the hill she had flown away for ever.

The old people cried.

This is the usual story of the poor; they bring up their little ones, and as soon as they get their full plumage they fly off one after the other to look for food; and the poor old parents remain at home to dream. But at least from that moment our debt began to diminish. At the end of every month, as soon as I received my five livres, my father and I went together to M. Robin at Mittelbronn. We went into that rat's hole full of gold and silver; the old rascal was there with his great wolf-dog on the ground-floor room; the small windows well guarded with iron bars, his green otter-skin cap over his forehead; up to his elbows in his ledgers, working at his accounts.

"Ha!" he would cry, "you here again! What a hurry you are in! I don't ask you for money; on

the contrary, do you want any more? Will you have ten or fifteen livres? You need only say so."

"No, no, Monsieur Robin," I would say to him. "Here is the interest off the bill, and here are four livres ten sous towards paying off the capital. Write off four livres ten sous on the back of the bill."

Then, when he saw that I had my wits about me, and that we were tired of being plundered, he wrote as I wished, snuffling out—

"This is what one gets for doing people a service." While I, leaning over his arm-chair, watched to see if he put it down right—"Interest, so much; principal, so much." My eyes were open, and I saw what being in the clutches of such a fox had cost us.

As we went out, my father, who remained at the door, having nothing to see to, as he could not read, my poor father said to me—

"Michel, you are our salvation; you are the strength of the family."

And when we returned to our cottage, turning to my brothers and my sisters, he would say—

"This is the master of us all—he who saves us from want. He knows something and we nothing; we must always listen to him. Without him we should be but God-forsaken creatures."

This was, unfortunately, too true. What can the unfortunate do who cannot even read? What can they do when they fall into the jaws of a Robin? They must submit to be eaten alive.

It took us more than a year to pay off the nine gold crowns and get our bill back. At last M. Robin said we gave him too much to do in writing off the money, and he refused to take it in such small sums. I said

very well, that we would pay it into the hands of the prévôt; then he gave way.

At last, when I took the bill back, mother jumped with joy. She wished she could read, and cried out—

“Is it done? is it really done? Are you quite sure, Michel?”

“Yes, quite sure.”

“No more *corvées* for Robin?”

“No, mother.”

“Just read it.”

They all leaned over me, listening with their mouths open; when I got to the end and read “Paid,” they began to dance, like savages rejoicing. Mother cried out—

“The goat won’t browse at our expense any longer! Well, it is not so bad. What *corvées* she has imposed upon us!”

Some time after, M. Robin having stopped at our cottage to ask if we wanted money, she seized a pitchfork and ran at him like a mad woman, crying—

“Ah! you want to get some *corvées* out of us again; just wait!”

She would have been the death of him if he had not run away, in spite of his great stomach, to the end of the village.

This is frightful; but is it surprising that honest people when driven to extremity should do so?

Usurers always end ill; they ought to remember that people are sometimes depressed, but soon recover, and that then it is their turn to balance an ugly account. I have seen that happen five or six times in my life. There were not gens d’armes enough in the country to protect these thieves. Let them think of this! I give

them good advice. It is true I write this story for peasants, but it may be of service to others. The labourer, the waggoner, the miller, the baker, all profit when corn is good, and he who sows is satisfied if every one benefits by it.

While this was going on, things remained as usual. Fairs and markets came, taxes were paid, people complained, the capucins begged, soldiers were drilled, and the custom of striking them with the flat side of the sword was again practised. Every Friday, when I went into town to buy salt, I saw old soldiers beaten by wretched little cadets! It was a very long time ago, yet I shudder when I think of it!

What disgusted me, too, was the foreign regiments in our pay. Schénau's Swiss, and all the rest, had the word of command in German. Is it not contrary to common sense, when they have to fight together against the same enemies, to have two methods of commanding? I remember an old soldier of our village, Martin Gros, complained of this folly, and said it did us a great deal of harm in the Prussian war. But our former kings and seigneurs did not care to see the people and the soldiers agree too well; they must have Swiss, Chamborans, Saxons regiments, Royal Allemand, &c., to look after the French. They had no confidence in us, and treated us like prisoners, surrounded by trustworthy guards.

In the end, we shall see what these foreigners did against that France which fed them; we shall see their regiments desert *en masse* to the enemy.

Now I go on with my story.

In the evening we read the newspapers, sometimes alone, sometimes with Chauvel. Maître Jean had made

no mistake about the seigneurs, princes, and bishops. Since M. Necker's dismissal, they had troubled themselves no more about the deficit; the gazettes only spoke of hunting parties, feasts, rejoicings, pensions, gratifications, &c., &c. Our lovely queen, Marie-Antoinette, M. le Comte d'Artois, the master of the horse, grand huntsmen, bedchamber lords and first gentlemen, cupbearers, footmen, grand carvers, and all that crowd of noble domestics who lived in clover, and did not trouble themselves about bankruptcy, soon found ministers to their fancy to continue their extravagance, Joly de Fleury and the rest of them, who rendered no accounts.

When Maître Jean read about these *fêtes* and galas he was no longer irritated, but his face fell; he coughed and said—

“What does the king's chamber mean, the chapel band, the chapel oratory, the store-room, the great stable, the little stable, the kennels, the privy purse, the ranger-ships of the parks of Fontainebleau, Vincennes, and Royal Monceau; the court of justice in eyre of the parks of Boulogne, of La Muette, and their dependencies; and the royal bailiwicks and ranger-ships of the chase of the Louvre and the falconry of France? What do all these things mean? What have we to do with them?”

Then Chauvel smiled and said—

“All good for trade, Maître Jean.”

“Trade?”

“No doubt—genuine trade, when the money goes and never comes back to the peasants. Luxury is good for trade; our ministers have asserted it hundreds of times; we are bound to believe them. We here, always work and pay; but there, the nobility amuse themselves and

spend. They have laces, embroideries, diamonds, a dozen valets in ordinary, those of the anterooms, upholsterers, male and female hairdressers, washers of body-linen, maids of honour, and riding-masters, who keep business going. They don't live on lentils and beans, nor wear jackets of grey linen, as we do."

"No, no, I believe you, Chauvel," answered my godfather in disgust; "nor the turnspits whom I see here either, nor the meat-inspectors, nor the dentists. It is shocking that so many millions of men should have to support such a race. Let us read something else. Good heavens! is it possible?"

When he turned over the leaf he found things still worse—buildings, all sorts of invitations, presentations, promenades in gold-laced hats, silk dresses, ceremonies which cost a sum of money which we poor peasants could hardly conceive.

Chauvel would cry with an air of wonder—

"What did M. Necker tell us? That never was money more abundant; we don't know what to do with it—it encumbers us!"

Then he looked at us with his small eyes full of cunning; rage filled our souls, for without paying very great attention one might well say that at a time when seven-eighths of France was suffering from cold and hunger, such an expenditure for the sake of contributing to the vanity of a set of rogues was frightful.

Chauvel, before leaving, always said—

"Go on, go on, that's right; taxes, expenses, and the deficit increase every year. We are getting on; the more we owe the richer we are, that's evident."

"Yes," said Maître Jean, as he saw him to the door, "that's very evident."

He shut the door, and I went home.

The more we read the papers the more we grieved ; we could see how the nobles took us for beasts, but what was to be done ? The militia, the police, and the troops were on their side. We used to think—

“How happy those seigneurs are in life, and we how wretched !”

The example of the queen and the Count d'Artois and others who lived in luxury at court spread to the small towns. There were *fêtes* upon *fêtes*, reviews, gala parties. Prévôts, colonels, majors, captains, lieutenants, and cadets did nothing but strut about, beat their soldiers, and sometimes even the peasants going home to their villages. Ask old Laurent Duchenim—he will tell you what sort of life the young officers of the Castella regiment led at the Panier-Fleuri ; how they drank champagne, and had in the women and girls under pretence of dancing ; and when the fathers and husbands objected they beat them with their canes back to Quatre-Vents.

One can easily conceive how sad we workpeople and peasants were to hear their band play, and to see the daughters of citizens, échevins, syndics, &c.—in fact, all that we looked upon as of any consequence : to see these daughters of theirs hanging on the arms of such youths as these, and so promenade to Tivoli. Yes, that made us sick ; perhaps they thought to ennoble themselves by it.

Our only hope now was the deficit ; all men of sense saw it must increase, above all since the queen and Count d'Artois had caused M. de Calonne to be made comptroller-general of finance. He may well boast of having exasperated us for four years with his loans—

his "transfers," as he called them—his extensions of the twentieths, and his other pilferings. We have had many a bad minister since Calonne's time, but none worse, for his inventions for taking people in have been handed down from one to the other, and even the most stupid have been able to have recourse to them, and to appear clever. He seemed to see everything in a favourable light, just as rogues, who have no intention to pay their debts, but only to increase them, give others confidence, and that is all they want.

For all that Calonne did not deceive us. Maître Jean could not open a paper without getting angry: he used to say—

"This rascal will cause me a fit of apoplexy; he does nothing but lie; he throws our money out of window; he is robbing Peter to pay Paul; he borrows right and left; and when called upon to pay, he will be off to England and leave us in the lurch. I prophesy it will be so; it cannot turn out otherwise."

All the world saw this, except the king, the queen, and the princes, whose debts Calonne had paid, and the courtiers on whom he showered pensions and gratifications of all sorts.

The clergy were not so foolish; they began to see that these tricks of Calonne could only end ill. Every time Chauvel came back from his rounds, his face was lighted, his eyes bright; he smiled and said, as he took his seat with Margaret behind the stove—

"Maître Jean, everything is going on better and better; our poor parish curés will only read the *Vicaire Savoyard* of Jean-Jacques; the canons and beneficed clergy of all sorts read Voltaire; they begin to preach the love of one's neighbour, and lament over the

people's misery ; they are making collections for the poor. All over Alsace and Lorraine one hears of nothing but good works ; in one convent the superior is draining the ponds to give work to the peasants ; at another they have forgiven this year's small tithes ; at another they give soup away. Better late than never ! All these good ideas occur to them at once. These people are very, very clever ; they see the boat is gradually sinking ; they want to find friends to stretch out a hand to save them."

His little eyes twinkled.

We hardly dared to believe what he said, it seemed too much ; but all through the years 1784, 1785, and 1786, Chauvel was always gayer, more inclined to smile ; he was like one of those birds which can fly so high from the acuteness of their vision, and can see things from afar, high above the clouds.

Little Margaret also became very pretty ; she often laughed as she went by the forge, and leaned in at the door as she called out, in her clear and gay tones—

"Good morning, Maître Jean ; good morning, M. Valentine ; good morning, Michel."

And then I used to run out for a moment, as I liked having a laugh with her. She was very brown and sunburnt ; the bottom of her little short blue skirt and her little lace boots covered with mud ; but she had such bright eyes, such pretty teeth, and such beautiful black hair, such an air of gaiety and courage, that, without knowing why, I felt quite pleased after having seen her ; and I used to watch her as she went up the alley to their house, and think—

"If I could only carry a basket and sell books with them, how happy I should be !"

But I got no farther; and when Maître Jean cried out to me, "Michel, what are you at there? work away!" I ran in again with, "Here I am, Maître Jean."

I had become a journeyman blacksmith; I earned my ten livres a month, and mother was receiving what help she needed. Lisbeth, at Wasselonne, sent her nothing, only good wishes from time to time; but servant-girls in a brewery want good clothes, and she was vain, so she sent nothing. But the second boy, my senior, herdsman at the Tierceclin convent, was earning four livres a month, and he sent his parents three. Etienne and Marceline plaited little baskets and cages, which they sold in town. I was very fond of them, and they of me, Etienne particularly; he would come and meet me every evening, limping and smiling, take my hand, and say—

"Come, Michel, come and see what I made to-day."

Sometimes it was very well done. Father always said, to encourage him—

"I could not have done it as well myself; I never could plait so well."

The idea of sending Etienne to M. Christopher occurred to me more than once; unfortunately, he could not walk the distance morning and evening, it was too far. But as he wanted to learn, I taught him when I came home from the forge, and so it is he learned to read and write.

Now no one at home begged any longer; we got our living by working; our parents had breathing time. Every Sunday, after vespers, I made my father take a seat at the Three Pigeons, and drink his half-pint of white wine; it did him good. Mother, who had always

longed for a good she-goat, could now lead one to graze by the side of the road. I bought one for her of old Schmoulé, the Jew, a beauty, with an udder that nearly touched the ground. My mother's greatest happiness was to attend to her, milk her, and make cheese; she was as fond of this goat as of her own eyes. Thus the poor old people wanted nothing, and I was as happy as possible.

After work, on Sundays and *fête* days, I had time to read. Maître Jean lent me good books, and I passed all the afternoon in studying them, instead of playing at ninepins with my comrades.

We were now in 1785, a moment of great disgrace to all France, when that wretched Cardinal de Rohan, whom the curé Christopher so despised, tried to seduce the young queen, Marie-Antoinette, by giving her a pearl necklace. Then we saw that this man must have been crazy, for he let himself be taken in by an actress; the actress at first escaped with the pearls, but she was arrested afterwards, and the executioner branded her with a fleur-de-lis on the shoulder. As for the cardinal, he was not branded because he was a prince—he had leave to retire to Strasbourg.

These distant events come into my mind again, and I recollect Maître Jean said, if by ill-luck Pater Benedict, the capucin, should try to seduce his wife, he would break his head for him with his hammer. I should have done so too, but our king was too good, and it was a great reflection on the queen that a cardinal could ever have had a hope to seduce her by presents. The whole country talked of it; all respect for seigneurs, princes, and bishops was lost; they had incurred more and more the contempt of respectable people. Nor was the

deficit forgotten; the lies of M. de Calonne and the scandals of the court were not likely to pay it.

So things dragged on till the end of 1786. On New Year's Eve, Chauvel and his daughter arrived covered with snow. They returned from Lorraine, and told us as they passed that the king had convoked the notables at Versailles to hear Calonne's statement, and to try and pay off the debt.

Maitre Jean was delighted: he cried—

“We are saved; our good king takes pity on his people; he intends to have equal taxation.”

But Chauvel, with his big basket still on his back, became white with anger when he heard him, and at last answered him—

“If our good king convokes the notables, it is because he cannot do otherwise. The debt now amounts to sixteen hundred and thirty millions! How can you be so silly as to believe that the princes of the blood, the principal nobles, the chiefs of the magistracy and the Church are going to pay out of their own pockets? No, they will try to put it on our backs, and this good queen, this valiant Count d'Artois, after leading the fine life you hear of, after treading on the people, committing every folly and every wickedness possible, these respectable people have not even the courage to accept the responsibility of their own acts; they convoke the notables to indorse it all. But we, we poor wretches, who pay everything and profit nothing, we are not convoked, our advice is not asked. It is dishonesty, it is meanness.”

Chauvel got furious while he was speaking. It was the first time I had ever seen him angry. He clenched his fist, and his little legs shook. Margaret, wet through

her black hair glued to her cheeks by melted snow, pressed up against him to support him. Maître Jean wanted to reply, but they would not listen to him. Dame Catherine got up from her wheel quite indignant, crying out that our good king did what he could; that the queen should not be treated with disrespect in the inn, she would not allow it! and Valentine said—

“You are right, Dame Catherine, God’s representatives on the earth must be respected. You are quite right—a thousand times right.”

He lifted up his long arms with an air of admiration. Chauvel and Margaret walked out at once, and did not come back again. They turned their heads the other way when they went by the forge, which vexed us greatly. Maître Jean said to Valentine—

“There! who told you to interfere? You are the cause of my best friend never coming to see me—a man for whom I have a great respect, and who has more sense in his little finger than you have in the whole of your great body. It would all have been made up. I should have understood at last that he was right.”

“And I,” replied Valentine, “I insist he was wrong. The notables wish the people’s happiness!”

Maître Jean got quite red, and looked at him sideways, muttering—

“Jackass! if you were not such an honest fellow, I should have sent you packing long ago.”

But he said this quietly, for Valentine would not have allowed him to insult him, not even Maître Jean. He was proud enough, in spite of his stupidity, and that very day I am sure he would have packed up his things and gone away. So in this way, instead of

losing one friend, we should have lost two; we were obliged to be careful.

Our vexation and annoyance at no longer seeing Chauvel increased every day. This lasted till one morning Maître Jean seeing the hawker and his daughter hurrying past the forge, came out quite distressed, and cried out—

“Chauvel! Chauvel! you are angry with me—I am not with you!”

Then they shook hands, they were near embracing one another, and some days after, Chauvel and Margaret, on their return from their rounds in Alsace, came back to their seat behind the stove, and the quarrel was never alluded to.

This was about the time the notables were to meet at Versailles, and we began to see that Chauvel was right in insisting that they would do nothing for the people, for these nobles having deliberated on Calonne’s speech, when he declared “that the debt could not be paid off by ordinary means, that the farmers-general should be abolished, provincial assemblies established to tax every one according to his means, and that all estates, without exception, should be taxed,” finished by rejecting everything.

Chauvel, when he heard that, laughed in his sleeve. Maître Jean cried—

“Ah! the bad breed!”

But Chauvel said—

“What can you expect? These people love themselves; their hearts are not hard enough to tax themselves nor to hurt themselves. If they had been called upon to lay a fresh tax on the people, they would not have been so long about it; they would already have said

‘Yes’ ten times as readily as once; but to tax their own estates is hard, I see it is—when one respects oneself, one must take care of oneself.”

What amused Chauvel the most was the procès-verbal at the beginning of the sittings of the notables: “After the king’s speech, monseigneur the keeper of the seals approached the throne, making three profound bows—the first before leaving the place, the second after taking a step or two, and the third when he was on the first step of the throne, then he received his majesty’s orders on his knees.”

“That is the finest part of it; that must be our salvation!”

The end was that the king dismissed Calonne, and put Monseigneur de Brienne, Archbishop of Toulouse, in his place. The notables then accepted the reforms, but no one knew the reason why. But then the members of the parliament of Paris, who had never shared in the extravagances of the court, who were judges and men of weight, very careful, and living in their own society, these judges were indignant at seeing that they were to be made to pay for others’ follies. They therefore opposed the taxation of lands, and declared that the States-General alone could impose taxes, which really meant that every one, workmen, peasants, citizens, and nobles, ought to vote alike the disposal of their money. The secret was out—it was a greater scandal than that of the queen and the Cardinal de Rohan—for the parliament declared that, from the beginning, the people had been taxed without their consent, and that it was an absolute robbery.

Thus began the Revolution.

It was so far clear that the monks and nobles had

been deceiving the people for ages—the first judges in the land told us so! The others had always existed at our expense; they had reduced us to a most frightful state of want to indulge themselves; their nobility was of no importance; they had no more rights than ourselves; they had no more minds or hearts than we had; their greatness arose from our ignorance; they had brought us up expressly in ideas contrary to common sense, that they might fleece us without trouble.

Let any one imagine Chauvel's delight when the parliament made this declaration.

"Now everything is going to be altered," cried he; "great events will happen—the end of the people's distress is drawing nigh, and justice begins!"

VIII.

THE declaration of the parliament of Paris spread like the wind to the remotest provinces. In the villages, at the fairs and markets, nothing was talked of but the States-General. Five or six peasants could hardly be on the road together, talking over their business for a quarter of an hour, before one or other of them would suddenly cry out—

“And the States-General! When are we to have our States-General?”

Then every one had his say about the abolition of turnpikes, octrois, vingtièmes, about the nobility and the third estate. They quarrelled, and then went into the nearest wineshop to make it up again; women mixed themselves up in it. Instead of living like weak people who pay their money without knowing where it goes, every one wanted accounts and to vote his own taxes—we were growing wise.

This was unfortunately a bad year, on account of the great drought; from the middle of June to the end of August not a drop of rain had fallen, consequently there was a failure of the wheat, oats, and other crops; the hay was not worth cutting. We saw famine approaching, for even the potatoes had yielded nothing. It was positive ruin. Besides these came the winter of 1788, the most dreadful winter that men of my age can remember.

A report was current that speculators had bought up all the corn in France to starve us; they called that providing for the famine. These robbers forestalled the grain in harvest-time; they exported it to England and when famine appeared they imported it, and sold it at their own price.

Chauvel told us that this association had been a long time in existence, and that King Louis XV had belonged to it. We would not credit it, it seemed too dreadful! But I have since ascertained that it was a fact.

The poor French nation never suffered so much as in the winter 1788-89, not even at the period of the great panics, nor later, in 1817, the dear year. Inspectors visited barns everywhere, obliged you to thrash your corn and send it to the town markets!

Even in spite of all, the States-General were not forgotten. On the contrary, want increased the indignation of the people; they reflected: "If you had not spent our money we should not be so wretched. But take care, this shall not continue. We will have neither Calonne nor Brienne; they are your ministers; we want the people's ministers, like Necker and Turgot."

During this frightful cold, when brandy froze in the cellars, Chauvel and his daughter never ceased travelling the country with their book-baskets. They had sheepskins round their legs, and we shuddered to see them start in frost and ice, with iron-shod sticks in their hands. They had a great sale for little books which came from Paris; sometimes, when they returned from their rounds, they brought us some, which we used to read round the red-hot stove. I have preserved some of these little books, and if I could lend them to you,

you would be surprised at the genius and strong good sense which people had, before the Revolution. All saw the true state of things, all the world was sick of beggarly tricks, except the nobles and the soldiers who were in their pay. One evening we were reading, *Diogenes to the States-General*; another, *Appeals, Grievances, and Remonstrances and Wishes of our Citizens of Paris*; or, *Reflections on the Interests of the Third Estate, Addressed to the People in the Provinces*; and other little similar works, which showed us that seven-eighths of France held the same opinions as ourselves about the court, the ministers, and the bishops. If I had not been lucky enough to earn my twelve livres a month, and if Claude had not sent all he could to support the poor old people and the two children they still had on their hands, God knows what must have become of them. Thousands of people perished. Fancy, then, the distress in Paris, a city where everything comes from without, and which would be entirely ruined but for the large profits to be got by sending corn, meat, and vegetables to its markets.

At this time something happened which pained me much, and which shows that in the same family all sorts of characters are found.

About the middle of December, during the deep snow, old Hocquard, who was a sort of messenger between the town and the villages for a remuneration of a few sous, came and told us that the postmaster had caused some unclaimed letters to be cried at market-time, and there was one for Jean-Pierre Bastien, of the Baraques-du-bois-de-Chênes. The postman, Brainstein, did not then deliver the letters from village to village. The postmaster, M. Pernet, came himself at market-time

with the letters in a basket ; he walked about among the stalls and asked people—

“Do you belong to Lutzelbourg? do you not come from Hultenhausen or from Harberg?”

“Yes.”

“Well, then, give this letter to Jean-Pierre or Jean-Claude such a one. I have had it five or six weeks. It is time it was delivered.”

Old Mother Hocquard would have taken charge of ours, but it cost twenty-four sous, and the good woman did not possess so much ; and she was not sure whether we would pay it.

It was hard to pay twenty-four sous for a letter at such a time. I wanted to leave it at the post ; but father and mother, thinking the letter came from Nicolas, were in great distress ; the poor old people said they would rather starve for a fortnight than not have news of their boy. So I went to fetch the letter. It was indeed from Nicolas ; and I went back and read it in our cottage in the midst of the pity of the parents and the astonishment of us all. It was dated December 1st, 1788.

Brienne had been dismissed with a pension of eight hundred thousand livres ; the States-General were summoned for the 1st of May, 1789 ; Necker was again minister ; but Nicolas did not trouble his head about all this ; and I copy this old piece of writing, yellow and torn, to let you see how the soldiers thought, while all the rest of France was crying aloud for justice.

Poor Nicolas was neither better nor worse than his comrades ; he had no education ; he argued like a fool, for want of having learned to read ; but he could not be blamed ; and perhaps the other who had written the

letter for him had occasionally added something of his own invention for the sake of effect.

Here is this letter :—

“In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

“To Jean-Pierre Bastien and Catherine his wife, Nicolas Bastien, corporal in the 3rd squadron of the Royal Allemand Regiment in garrison in Paris.

“Dear father and mother, sisters and brothers, you must be still alive, for it would be unnatural for you to die in four years and six months, while I am all alive and well. I am not as big yet as Kountz of Phalsbourg, the syndic of the butchers ; but without vanity I am as strong as he is ; my appetite has not failed me yet, nor anything else, and that’s the chief thing.

“Dear father and mother, if you could see me now on horseback, my hat on my ear, my feet in the stirrups, and my sabre carried either at the present or otherwise, or when I take an agreeable walk in the city with a young acquaintance on my arm, you would be surprised, you would never believe I could be your son ! and if I wanted to pass myself off as noble, as many in the regiment allow themselves to do, it would only depend on myself ; but you may believe I am incapable of doing it out of consideration for your grey hairs, and the respect which I bear you.

“You must know that the first year Sergeant Jerome Leroux caused me many vexations on account of the scars on his face from the jug. But now I am corporal in the 3rd troop, and I only owe him the salute when off duty ; some day I shall be sergeant, and we will settle that matter, for I ought to tell you that I am regimental fencing-master, and the first year I had

already wounded two prévôts of the Noailles regiment, and now no one, with the exception of Lafougère, De Lauzun, and Banquet, dares to look askance at me. That comes from the eye and the wrist. You have it or have it not. It is a gift of the Lord ! Even the fencing-masters come and challenge me from jealousy. The 1st of last July, before leaving Valenciennes, the staff of the regiment had betted on me against that of the regiment of Conti (infantry). Their fencing-master, Bayard, a dark little man from the South, always called me ‘the Alsatian.’ That irritated me. I sent two prévôts to call him out. It was all settled, and the next day we were paraded in the park. He jumped about like a cat ; but in the third attack I ran him through, just under the right nipple, very neatly. He had not time to say, ‘Hit !’ All was over. All the regiment rejoiced. I was put under arrest for forty-eight hours for being so unlucky ; but our major, the Chevalier de Mendell, sent a basket from his own table to Nicolas Bastien—a basket full of meat and choice wines. That is it ! Nicolas had made Royal Allemand win ; they would feast him well. From that time I have been respected by my superiors. If you only knew what is going on here ; how these vagabond citizens are agitating, especially the limbs of the law ; if you knew that, you would understand that opportunities of distinguishing oneself are not wanting. No later than 27th of August last the commandant of the watch, Dubois, made us charge the mob on the Pont Neuf, and all that day up to twelve at night we rode over them on the Place Dauphine and the Place de Grève, and everywhere. If you had seen the next day how we massacred them in the Rue Saint-Dominique and the Rue Meslée, you

would have said, 'Well done!' I was the first on the right of the troop, 3rd rank; every one within reach was cut down. Lieutenant-Colonel de Reinach, after the charge, said the lawyers would not want to make themselves heard any more. I believe you. They have been hit hard. See what a fine thing discipline is! When the command is given, you must go. Father, mother, brothers and sisters may be before you; you ride over them like dirt. I should be sergeant already, only I must be able to write to make my report. But be easy; I have my little affair to settle with Jerome Leroux. A young man of good family, Gilbert Gardet, of the 3rd squadron, is teaching me my letters, and I give him lessons in the use of the small-sword. I shall get on, I answer for it. The first opportunity you shall see my handwriting, and now embracing you and wishing you all you desire both in this world and the next, I make my mark.

“+ NICOLAS BASTIEN,
“Fencing-master

“In the Royal Allemand Regiment.

“This 1st of December, 1788.”

Poor Nicolas saw nothing more meritorious than fighting. His noble officers looked on him as a sort of bull-dog which is let loose at another dog, and on which one wins money, and thought it very fine. I forgave him with all my heart, but I was ashamed to show it to Maître Jean and Chauvel. All the time I was reading father and mother lifted their hands in admiration, mother especially; she laughed, and cried—

“I knew Nicolas would get on! Do you see what progress he makes? It is because we have always lived

at Baraques that we are so poor. But Nicolas will be noble—I foretell it—he will be noble.”

Father was pleased too, but he saw the danger of fighting duels, and said as he looked down—

“Yes, yes, that’s all very well, provided some one else does not run him through just under the right nipple; that would break our hearts. It is terrible all the same; the other one, perhaps, had a father and mother.”

“Never mind, never mind!” cried mother.

And then she took the letter and went and showed it to the neighbours, saying—

“A letter from Nicolas! He is corporal and fencing-master in his regiment; he has already killed several men—no one dares look at him askance now.”

And so it went on. Two or three days after she gave me the letter, and as Maître Jean had asked for it, I was obliged to take and read it in the evening. Chauvel and Margaret were there; I did not dare to raise my eyes. Maître Jean said—

“What a misfortune to have such rascals in a family, who would cut down father and mother, sisters and brothers, and think, moreover, that it is fine because it is discipline!”

Chauvel answered—

“Bah! What Nicolas tells us there is worth knowing. These charges in the streets, these massacres, we knew nothing about them; the gazettes never mentioned them, though I have heard indirectly in my rounds that in the neighbourhood of Grenoble, Bordeaux, and Toulouse, large bodies of troops had been set in motion. All this is a very sure sign; it proves that the current carries all with it, that nothing can stop it. These fights have already obtained for us the dismissal of

Loménie de Brienne, and the convocation of the States-General. Fights are not what we have to fear ; what are fifty or one hundred regiments when the masses are against them ? Only let the people insist on what they want ; only let the third estate be of the same mind ; the rest is like froth which flies off when a strong wind blows. I am glad to hear all this ; let us prepare for the elections, let us be ready, and let good sense and justice show themselves.”

Chauvel from this time no longer pinched up his lips ; he seemed full of confidence ; and in spite of the famine, which lasted till the end of March, in spite of all, peasants, workpeople, and citizens held together. Chauvel was right when he said, at the declaration of parliament, that great events were preparing ; each man felt stronger and more resolute ; it was like a new life ; and the most miserable wretch of all, instead of crouching along as formerly, seemed to hold up his head and look the sky in the face.

IX.

THE more the famine increased, the more courage did the poor display. Those of Baraques, Hultenhausen, and Quatre-Vents were nothing but skin and bone; they dug for roots under the snow, and boiled the stinging-nettles which grew about the ruins of houses. They had recourse to all sorts of means to support themselves. Want was fearful, but by slow degrees spring appeared.

The capucins from Phalsbourg dared to beg no longer; they would have been torn to pieces on the road, for the regiment of La Fere, which had just relieved that of Castella, refused to support them; they were old soldiers, tired of the young nobles and blows from the flat of the sword.

Besides, there was something in the air; the judges and seneschals had been compelled to publish the king's edict for the convocation of the States-General. They knew that the judges and the seneschals would receive the last writs on a certain day, and as soon as received they would publish them at their sittings, and affix them to the doors of the churches and town-halls; that the curés would read them out after their sermons, and that, at the latest, a week after such public notice we should all of us, workmen, citizens, and peasants, assemble at the Hôtel de Ville to draw

up a statement of our grievances and complaints, and elect deputies, who should convey this statement to a place which would be indicated later.

This was all we knew generally. Thank God, we had complaints enough to put into the statements of all the parishes. We also knew that a second assembly of notables had met at Versailles, to settle the last measures to be taken before the States-General met; and in this period of famine, in December, 1788, January and February, 1789, every one heard that the third estate—citizens, merchants, peasants, workmen, and the poor generally—were to be consulted—that our poor fathers had been already consulted long ago, in similar States-General, but that they were obliged to appear on their knees, with ropes round their necks, before the king, the nobles, and the bishops, to tender the statement of their grievances. We were all indignant when we learned that parliament desired to see our representatives in a similar position, which they called the precedent of 1614.

Every one then abused the parliament, and we saw if they were the first to ask for the States-General, it was not to relieve or render justice to the people, but in order that their own estates might not be taxed, as the lands of the poor had been for so long a time.

The gazettes told us that wheat was coming from America and Russia, but at Baraques and all over the mountains the inspectors searched every house even to the thatch, to carry off the little we still possessed. In the great towns they rose against them—they were obliged to treat the people with a little forbearance; but they stripped quiet people because they took it quietly.

I recollect, towards the end of February, when the famine was at its worst, the mayor, échevins, and syndics of the town, who used to search the sheds and barns in the neighbourhood, came one day and dined at Maître Jean's inn. Chauvel, who always brought us the last news from Alsace and Lorraine, on his return from his rounds, happened to be in the great room; he had put his basket down on a bench, and suspected nothing. Seeing all these people in powdered wigs, cocked hats, square-cut coats, woollen stockings, cuffs and gloves furred to the elbows, and behind them all the lieutenant of the prévôt, Desjardins, tall, dry, yellow, gold-laced cocked hat, and his sword on his hip, he was rather frightened at first. The prévôt's lieutenant looked stealthily at him over his shoulder—it was he who in times gone by tortured people—he looked mischievous; while the rest laid aside their insignia of office and went to look into the kitchen, he unbuckled his sword and put it in the corner, then he quietly uncovered the basket and looked at the books.

Chauvel was standing behind, his hands in his breeches-pockets under his jacket, as if there was nothing the matter.

"Well!" cried the échevins and syndics, going and coming, "another *corvée* over."

They all laughed.

The kitchen door was open, the fire blazed on the hearth, and its light spread into the room; the little syndic of the bakers, Merle, lifted up the covers of the saucepans, and made Dame Catherine explain everything to him; Nicole was laying a fine white cloth on the table, and the lieutenant of police never stirred

from his place. He took book after book out of the basket, and laid them in piles on the bench.

"Is it you who sell these books?" said he at last, without turning round.

"Yes, sir," quietly replied Chauvel; "at your service."

"Don't you know," replied the other, drawling and speaking through his nose, "that they may bring you to the gallows?"

"What, to the gallows?" said Chauvel; "these good little books? Look here! *Deliberations to take for the Meetings of the Bailiwicks*, by Mgr. the Duke of Orleans—*Reflections of a Patriot on the Approaching Meeting of the States-General—Griefs, Hopes, and Suggestions of Letters of Carriages, with a Prayer to the Public to Admit them into their Statements*—that is not very dangerous."

"And the king's privilege?" said the lieutenant in a dry tone.

"The privilege! You know well, sir, that since the time of Mgr. Loménie de Brienne, pamphlets require none."

The lieutenant went on examining, and the others stood round them.

Maître Jean and I stood farther off, against the press; we were not altogether without apprehension ourselves. Chauvel looked aside at us, to give us courage; he certainly had something hidden in his basket, and the lieutenant with his pointed nose winded it.

Luckily, as the books were nearly all on the bench, Dame Catherine appeared in all her glory with the smoking soup-tureen, and the little syndic Merle, with his wig in disorder, began to cry out as he followed her in—

“Sit down, sit down, here is the *soupe à la crème*! Good heavens! what are you looking at there? I was sure of it, inspecting again—have we not had enough inspections already? If you don’t sit down I shall begin by myself.”

He had already taken his place, his napkin under his chin, and was removing the cover of the tureen, which sent a very pleasant smell into the room; at the same time Nicole brought in some ribs of beef soured in vinegar, and all the syndics and *échevins* hastened to take their places. The lieutenant, seeing the company beginning without him, said in an ill-humour—

“You know a game put off is not lost.”

Then throwing the book among the others, he went and sat down by Merle.

Chauvel soon packed up his books again, and went away, his basket on his shoulder, looking at us very contented. We breathed again, for to hear a lieutenant of police talk of a rope, after all the promises which had been made us, almost took one’s breath away.

Well, Chauvel got off safe, and these gentlemen dined as the nobles and as the rich dined before the Revolution. They had brought their own wine, fresh meat, and white bread with them from town.

At the door dozens of mendicants begged and prayed, and looked in at the windows asking alms—some of them with appeals which made one shudder, especially women with their famished children in their arms. But these town gentlemen did not listen to them; they laughed as they uncorked their bottles, and helped one another, while they talked about trifles. At three they started again, some for town in their carriages,

others on horseback to continue their visits in the mountain.

The same evening Chauvel came to see us with Margaret. He had hardly appeared at the door when Maître Jean cried out to him—

“How you frightened us! What a horrid life you lead, Chauvel! It is not living at all, being always under the gallows, on the topmost round of the ladder. I could not stand these fears for a fortnight.”

“No more could I,” said Dame Catherine.

We all thought the same, but he smiled.

“Bah! that’s nothing,” said he, sitting down, “that’s nothing but a joke. Ten or fifteen years ago, indeed, then I used to be hunted about; then I dared not be taken with Kehl or Amsterdam editions in my possession; I should have made but one step from Baragues to the galleys; and some years before that I should have had a short shrift and a long rope. Yes, then it was dangerous, but let them arrest me now, it would but be for a short time; they cannot break my arms and legs to make me give up my accomplices.”

“All the same,” said Maître Jean, “you were not very easy, Chauvel; you had something in your basket?”

“Of course I had; this is what I had,” said he, throwing a bundle of gazettes on the table. “Let us see how we are getting on.”

Then having shut doors and shutters, we read till nearly midnight; and I think I can but please you if I copy from some of these old papers. It softens one to see how these brave people stood by one another. Everywhere the nobles and the provincial parliaments were agreed to oppose the States-General. In Franche-

Comté the people of Besançon had driven away their parliament, because it opposed the king's edict, and declared that the estates of the nobles were naturally free from taxation, that so it had been for a thousand years, and so it should continue.

In Provence the majority of the nobility and the parliament had protested against the king's edict for the convocation of the same States-General. Then, for the first time, was heard the name of Mirabeau, a noble, whom the others would not have, and who joined the third estate; he said that these protestations of the nobility and the parliaments "were neither useful, nor fitting, nor lawful." Never had a man spoken with such vigour, such truth, and such grandeur; he was not sufficiently noble for the others; they refused him admission to their sittings, which showed their good sense.

They were fighting everywhere. At Rennes, in Brittany, the nobles killed the citizens who supported the edict, principally young people well known to be brave. These citizens were not strong enough; they called on the other cities in their province for help, and this is the answer sent by the youth of Nantes and Angers as they hurried on by forced marches:—

"Shuddering with horror at the news of the murders committed at Rennes, summoned by a general cry of vengeance and indignation; seeing that the benevolent measures of our august king to free his faithful subjects of the third estate from slavery find obstacles only among these selfish nobles, who can only see in the tears and distress of the wretched but a hateful yoke which they seek to continue on races to come; after a knowledge of our strength, and intending to break the

last link which fetters us, we have resolved to set off in sufficient numbers to put down those vile aristocratic executioners. Let us protest beforehand against all decrees which might denominate us seditious when our objects are pure; let us swear, in the name of honour and our country, that should an unjust tribunal obtain possession of us, let us swear to do all that nature, courage, and despair can inspire men to do for their own preservation. Done at Nantes, in the Exchange Hall, January 28, 1789."

This was uttered by young commercial men. Others, from Angers, were also on the march, and this is what the women of this gallant place wrote: "Resolved by the mothers, sisters, wives, and lovers of the young citizens of Angers, in extraordinary sitting; after reading the resolutions of these young men, we declare if these troubles begin again, and in case of departure, all ranks of citizens uniting for the common cause, we will join the nation, whose interests are our interests, reserving to ourselves, strength not being our attribute, to take as our duty, and as our own sphere of usefulness, care of the baggage, supplies of food, preparations for marching, and all the cares, comforts, and services of which we are capable. Let us protest that the intention of us all is not to fail in the respect and obedience which we owe the king, but that we will perish sooner than abandon our sons, our husbands, our brothers, and our lovers, preferring the glory of sharing their danger to a shameful and inactive security."

When we read that, we cried, and said—

"What brave women and gallant people! We might do as they do!"

We felt ourselves strong, and Chauvel, with uplifted finger, cried—

“May the nobles, the bishops, and the parliaments try to understand that! It is a great sign when even women insist on having their rights, and when they animate their brothers, husbands, and lovers, instead of wishing to keep them from fighting. It is not often that happens, but when it does, the other’s cause is lost beforehand.”

X.

SOME days after the 20th March, 1789, as the snow was thawing, news came that large notices with the great stamp of three fleur-de-lis had been affixed to the doors of the churches, convents, and town-halls the evening before to summon us all to the Hôtel de Ville of Phalsbourg.

It was true! These notices called the nobility, the clergy, and the third estate to the meetings of the bailiwick, where our States-General were to be prepared.

I cannot do better than copy one of these notices for you. You will see for yourselves the difference between the States-General of that period and the way things are done now :—

“Regulation of the King for the Execution of the Writs of Summons of January 24th, 1789.

“The king, in addressing letters convoking the States-General of the different provinces under his rule, has desired that all his subjects should be invited to co-operate in the election of deputies who are to form this great and solemn assembly. His majesty has desired that from the extreme limits of his kingdom, and from its least-known dwellings, every one should be certain that he can make his wishes and appeals reach him. His majesty, then, has ascertained with real satis-

faction that by means of assemblies of all ranks, instituted in the whole of France for the representation of the third estate, he will be in communication with all the inhabitants of his kingdom, and become more intimately acquainted with their wants and their wishes, in a manner more prompt and more certain."

After that the notice referred to the nobility and clergy, to their convocation, to the number of deputies to the bailiwick assemblies, and, later, to the States-General, who should be sent by the bishops, abbés, chapters, and endowed ecclesiastical communities, both regular and secular, of both sexes.

Then it touched upon what related to us:—

"1st. Parishes and communities, towns as well as cities, shall meet at the guildhall before the judge or some other public officer. At this meeting, all inhabitants composing the third estate, born or naturalised Frenchmen, of the age of twenty-five, having a settled habitation, and paying rates and taxes, shall have a right to be present at the drawing up of the memorials, and election of deputies.

"2. The deputies chosen shall, at the Hôtel de Ville, and under the presidency of the municipal officers, form the assembly of the third estate for the town. They shall draw up the memorial of the complaints and grievances of the said town, and shall name deputies to convey it to the principal bailiwick.

"3. The number of deputies who shall be chosen by the parishes and communes in the country, to convey the memorials, shall be at the rate of two for every two hundred houses and upwards, of three for every three hundred houses, and so on.

"4. In the principal bailiwicks or seneschals' juris-

dictions the deputies of the third estate, in a preliminary meeting, shall make a digest of all the memorials in one, and shall appoint one-fourth of their number to convey the said memorial to the general assembly of the bailiwick.

“5. His majesty commands that in the said principal bailiwicks the election of deputies of the third estate shall take place immediately after the collection of the memorials of all the towns and communes which shall be there present.”

It will be observed that instead of naming, as they do now, deputies of whom one knows nothing, but who are sent down from Paris with good letters of introduction, one chose, as was most sensible, from one's own village. Those persons then selected the most able, the boldest, the best educated among themselves to sustain our appeals to the king, the princes, the nobles, and the bishops; and in this fashion we had what was good. Look at what our deputies did in '89, and what these do to-day; then you will see whether it was better to have peasants who were chosen because they were known, or men whom you elect because the prefect recommends them to you. I do not say this to undervalue these gentlemen, but even in good things there is a choice. It is quite evident that deputies ought to represent the persons who return them, and not the government whose conduct they are charged to watch over: that is plain enough. Suppose that Louis XVI., through his seneschals, prévôts, baillies, governors of provinces, and his police, had taken on himself to name the deputies of the third estate. What would have happened? These deputies would never dare to contradict the king, who had appointed them;

they would have discovered that whatever government wished was right, and we should be still stagnating.

I need not describe the enthusiasm and contentment of every one when they knew that the States-General would meet, for there had been still some doubts about it. Often deceived, we hardly dared believe in anything, but this time the business could not be delayed.

That same day Maître Jean and I, towards five in the evening, were working at the forge, very happy. Every time godfather heated the iron he cried out, his fat face looking quite joyous—

“Well, Michel, so we shall have our States-General!”

To which I replied—

“Yes, Maître Jean, the business is going on right now.”

And then the hammers began to work away again without stopping: a joyful heart adds to one's strength.

Out of doors the mud was deeper than we had seen it for a long time; snow was melting, water running, carrying the manure-heaps with it, and filling the cellars. Women came out every moment to stop it with their large brooms. One want leads to another; after having performed *corvées* for the king, the seigneur, and the convent, the idea of paving the village street could not occur to you, you were too happy to rest and live in dirt. Suddenly five or six old Baraquins, Father Jacques Letumier, Nicolas Cochart, Claude Huré, Gauthier Courtois, in fact, all the notables of the vicinity, stopped before our forge with a majestic air, and uncovered themselves with much ceremony.

“Ha! is that you, Letumier?” cried Maître Jean, “and you, Huré? What the devil are you doing there?”

He laughed, but the others were serious, and the tall Letumier, bending his back under the little door, said from the bottom of his throat like the crockery-hawkers—

“Maître Jean Leroux, with all respect to you we have a communication to make you.”

“To make me?”

“Yes, to yourself, in respect of these elections.”

“Oh, well, come in. You are standing out there in the mud.”

Then one after the other they came in. There was hardly room for them to stand. The others were cogitating how to begin their speech, when Maître Jean said—

“Well, what’s the matter? What do you want to ask me? Do not hesitate. You know me well enough, if it be anything I can do.”

“Well, this is what it is,” said the woodcutter Cochart; “you know the three Baraques vote together?”

“Yes. Well?”

“Well, the three Baraques have two hundred houses. We have a right to elect two deputies.”

“Without doubt; and then?”

“And then, you are the first—that is a matter of course. But the other is a difficulty for us.”

“What! do you intend to name me?” said Maître Jean, inwardly flattered all the same.

“Yes; but the other?”

Then Maître Jean was quite satisfied, and said—

“We are roasting ourselves here at this fire. Let us go into the inn—have a jug of good wine together; that will sharpen our wits!”

Of course they agreed. I meant to remain at the

forge; but Maître Jean called to me from the middle of the street—

“Come, Michel, come; a day like this all of us should be of one mind.”

And we all went into the large room together. They sat down round the table, along the windows. Maître Jean called for wine and glasses, a loaf of bread, and some knives. They touched glasses, and as Dame Catherine looked on in surprise, not understanding the meaning of it all, and Letumier was wiping his mouth preparatory to explaining it to her, Maître Jean cried—

“For myself, I am flattered—I accept; but I must warn you, if you do not name Chauvel at the same time, I shall refuse.”

“Chauvel! the Calvinist?” cried Letumier, turning his head and opening his eyes wide.

And the rest looked horrified at one another, and cried—

“The Calvinist! He our deputy?”

“Listen,” said Maître Jean; “we are not now going to meet yonder, so to speak, in council, to discuss the mysteries of our holy religion, or the holy sacraments, and the like. We are going there on our own business, and chiefly to relieve ourselves of subsidies, poll-tax, *corvées*, land-tax; to give a turn to our seigneurs, if it be possible, and get ourselves out of the scrape. Well, I am a sensible man—at least, I believe so—but not sufficiently so to win such a great stake as this. I can read and write, and I know where the shoe pinches, and if it was only a question of braying like an ass I could play my part as well as any one belonging to Quatre-Vents, Mittelbronn, or elsewhere. But that is not the business in hand. We shall meet knowing

fellows there of all descriptions—attorneys, baillics, seneschals, men well educated, who can give us a thousand reasons founded on laws, customs, practices, for this and for that, and if we cannot reply to them categorically, they will fix the halter round our necks again for ever. Do you see that?”

Letumier opened his mouth from ear to ear.

“Yes—but Chauvel—Chauvel,” said he.

“Hear me out,” said Jean. “I want to be your deputy ; and if any one from amongst us speaks I can and will second him ; but answer myself ! no. I have neither sufficient instruction, nor sufficient information ; and I can tell you that in all this part of the country, I don’t care where, there is no one so capable of speaking for us and defending us as Chauvel ; he knows everything—laws, customs, warrants, everything. That little man, do you see, is acquainted with every book he has carried on his back for the last five-and-twenty years. When on the road, you think, perhaps, he is looking about him, at the fields, the trees, the hedges, the bridges, and the rivers. Not he. He has his nose over one of his old books as he walks along, or else he is meditating some argument ; in fact, if you are not fools, and do not want to keep your *corvées*, land-taxes, and exactions, that is the man you will choose first, even in preference to me. If Chauvel is there I will stand fast by him ; but if he is not, you had better not elect me at all, for I refuse at once.”

Maitre Jean spoke very plainly, and the others scratched their ears.

“But,” said the woodcutter Cochart, “will they let him sit ?”

“The notice makes no difference in religion,” answered

Maître Jean ; “ every one is called upon, provided he be a Frenchman, is twenty-five years of age, and is on the list of tax-payers. Chauvel pays as we all do, perhaps more ; and did not our good king last year restore their civil rights to Lutherans, Calvinists, and even to Jews ? You ought to know that ; let us elect Chauvel, and not trouble ourselves farther. I answer for it, he will do us more good and more credit than fifty capucins ; he will defend our interests with good sound sense, and courage too. It will be to the honour of the three Baraques, believe me. Here, Catherine ! another jug.”

The others were still doubtful ; but when Maître Jean filled the glasses again, and said—“ This is my last word : if you do not name Chauvel, I refuse : if you do name him, I accept ; here is our good king’s health !” all seemed affected, repeating—

“ Here is our good king’s health.”

And when they had finished drinking, Letumier said, with a very grave face—

“ It will be hard work to get the women to put up with that ; but as it has gone so far, Maître Leroux, here is my hand.”

“ And mine also,” said another, leaning over the table.

And so it went, all round the table.

After that, having emptied the jug, every one rose to go home. They were the notables, and we were sure all the others would do as they did.

“ The business is, then, settled ?” cried Maître Jean to them, well pleased, at the door.

“ All settled,” said they, as they walked off, paddling through the mud.

We then returned to the forge ; all this had made us

thoughtful. We worked on till seven, and then Nicole called us to supper.

The meeting was for the Sunday following. Chauvel and his daughter had been on their journey for a fortnight; they had never sold so many pamphlets; however, Maître Jean hoped to find them at the great meeting in the town-hall. That evening nothing fresh occurred—the day had been sufficiently eventful.

XI.

As I walked down the old street of Baraques the Sunday following with my father, between six and seven in the morning, the sun rose red over the woods of La Bonne Fontaine. It was the first fine day of the year; the thatched roofs and the little chimneys in black bricks, whence the smoke wound into the air, resembled gold; the little puddles along the street glistened as far as one could see, white clouds stretched away in the sky, and one could hear from far, very far, the clarionettes of the villages which were on the road, the drums beating the *rappel* in the town, and the first tinklings of the church bells, announcing the mass of the St. Esprit, before the elections. My father, now grown old, sunburnt, feeble, with his grey beard and bare neck, walked next to me, his frock of coarse raw linen thread rolled up round his loins; his trousers, also of linen, fastened by a string round his ankles; and his shoes of unblackened leather, without heels, laced up. He wore on his head, like all peasants of our time, a coarse woollen cap, since carried on the flag of the Republic, and looked pensively out of the corners of his eyes to the right and to the left, as if he expected something to take us by surprise—by dint of suffering one distrusts everything—every instant the poor man said—

“Michel! take care, and say nothing; let us hold our tongues; this will end ill.”

I was more confident. The habit of hearing Maître Jean and Chauvel discuss the affairs of the country, and of reading myself what took place at Rennes, Marseilles, and Paris, gave me more courage; besides, at eighteen the work of the forge had spread out my shoulders; the big twelve-pound hammer was not too heavy for my hands; I had hardly any beard; but that did not prevent me looking a man in the face, whether soldier, citizen, or peasant. I liked to be well dressed; on Sundays I wore a cap of blue cloth, long boots, a velvet waistcoat after the smith’s fashion; and, since I must own it, I looked at the pretty girls with pleasure; I found them handsome; it is not forbidden to do so! There!

All the village was astir as we came near the inn. Maître Jean and Valentine in the great room, the windows wide open, were drinking a bottle of wine and eating a crust of bread together before starting. They had both their best clothes on; Maître Jean in his master’s coat, with wide skirts, red waistcoat, his breeches buckled round his great calves, and silver buckles in his round-toed shoes; Valentine in a grey linen blouse, the collar and breast ornamented with red binding; a large silver heart fastened his shirt, his peasant’s cap stuck over his ear. They saw us and cried—

“Here they are.”

We went in.

“Now, Bastien, our good king’s health!” cried Maître Jean, filling the glasses, and my father, with tears in his eyes, answered—

“Yes, yes, Jean, to our good king’s health! Long live our good king!”

It was the fashion to believe then that the king did everything; he was looked upon as a sort of god who watched over his children, consequently my father loved his king.

We drank our wine, and the notables soon arrived. They were the same as the evening before, with Grandfather Letumier, so old that he could hardly see, and he had to be led every step to prevent his falling. Nevertheless he insisted on voting; and while they were gone to fetch wine, were filling glasses, and every one was talking and crying, “Here we are, it’s settled, the Baraquins will make themselves known; be easy, they will all vote together!”—while they were shaking hands, and laughing, and drinking, the poor old man said—

“Ah! life is long, life is long! but never mind, when I see such a day as this, I don’t think of my own ills.”

Maître Jean answered—“You are right, Father Letumier; we no longer heed the days of hail and snow when once harvest is come; here are the sheaves! they have cost us some labour, it is true; but now we are going to thrash, winnow, and sift them; we have bread, please God, and our children too; long life to the king!”

And we all repeated, “Long life to the king!”

Glass met glass, they embraced all round; then they set off arm-in-arm, my father and I last.

All the Baraquins, assembled round the fountain, followed us with clarionettes and drums. I never heard anything like it; the whole country was full of music and bell-ringing; on all sides you could see along the

roads rows of people dancing, waving their hats, throwing their caps in the air, and singing—

“Long live the good king! the father of his people.”

The bells answered one another from the height of the mountain to the far end of the plain; it never ceased; and the nearer we came to the town, the louder was the din; flags of white silk, embroidered with golden lilies, waved from the church, from the barrack windows, over the hospital, everywhere. No, I never saw anything so fine. In later times of Republican victories, the cannon roaring on our ramparts made one's heart beat, and one was proud to shout, “Vive la nation! vive la République!” But on this occasion it was not a question of killing people; they thought to win everything at once by embracing one another.

These things are not to be described!

As we came near the town, M. the Curé Christopher arrived at the head of his parishioners where the two roads meet; then they stop again, raise their hats and shout again, “Long live the king!”

The curé and Maître Jean embrace; and then laughing, singing, clarionettes playing, drums beating, the two parishes continue their advance to the entrance, already crowded with people. I see now the sentry of the La Fere Regiment, in his white coat and grey facings, his enormous cocked hat on his powdered wig, his heavy musket on his arm, who motioned to us to halt. The bridges were encumbered with carts and carriages; all the old people had themselves conveyed to the town-hall; they all wanted to vote before they died; many of them cried like children.

After that, let those that like say that men of our

time had not very great good sense ; from the first to the last, all wanted their rights.

We had to wait there twenty minutes before crossing the bridge, there was such a crowd. Inside the town was the sight, the streets full of people, innumerable flags from all the windows ; there you should have heard the cries of “ *Vive le roi !* ” sometimes beginning in the square, sometimes near the arsenal at the Gate de l’Allemagne, and go round the ramparts and glacis like the rolling of thunder.

When we had once passed the old portcullis, you could go neither forwards nor backwards, nor see four paces before you. The inns, taverns, breweries, Saint Christopher, Cœur Rouge, and Capucin streets, all the length of the two barracks and the hospital, formed one compact mass of men.

The mass of the St. Esprit had just begun, but how to get near the church ? The patrols of the La Fere Regiment in vain called, “ *Gare ! gare !* ” They were hustled back into corners, and remained with grounded arms, not able to stir.

Maître Jean recollected that the inn of his friend Jacques Renaudot was close by, and without saying anything to us, but only making us a sign to come on, led the curé Christopher, Valentine, and myself to the steps of the Cheval Blanc. But we could only get in by the back door, into the kitchen ; the great room was as full as an egg ; they had been obliged to open all the doors and windows to be able to breathe. Mother Jeannette Renaudot gave us a good reception, and took us upstairs to the first floor, into an unoccupied room, where they brought us wine, beer, and a pie—all we wanted.

The others below looked about for us, thinking they had missed us in the crowd. We could not call them, nor could we have them all upstairs. We therefore remained as we were, until towards one o'clock, when half the villages had already voted, and those from the Baraques were turning by the Fouquet corner to go towards the place; we then left, and taking the Rue de l'Hôpital, we reached the town-hall first; they thought we had been there some time, and every one said—

“There they are.”

The old town-hall, with its bell-tower, its large open windows under the clock, its arched entrance, through which the villages poured one after the other, sounded from top to bottom like a drum. At a distance it resembled an ant's hill. The Baraquins passed before the people from Lutzelbourg; they were between the old cistern and the grand staircase. Maître Jean, Valentine, my father, and myself walked in front; but the others, those from Vilschberg, not having given all their votes, we had to wait on the steps for some time; how every man's heart beat then when he reflected on what he was about to do! Behind us, under the old elms, after the cries of “Vive notre bon roi!” I heard a clear voice, a voice we all recognised, that of little Margaret Chauvel, who was crying, like the almanack-sellers—

“*What is the Third Estate?* by M. l'Abbé Sièyes; buy *What is the Third Estate? Assemblies of the Bailiwicks*, of Monseigneur the Duke of Orleans; who will buy *The Assemblies of the Bailiwicks?*”

I turned to Maître Jean and said, “Do you hear little Margaret?”

“Yes, I have heard her a long time,” said he. “What

good people these Chauvels are! They may well boast of having done good to their country. You should go and tell Margaret to send her father here. He cannot be far off; he will be pleased to hear himself named."

Elbowing my way, I pushed through the crowd to the top of the steps of the town-hall, and I perceived Margaret selling her books, with her basket on a bench in the place under the elms. One can hardly fancy anything like the little rogue, catching the peasants by the sleeve, and talking to them in German and French. Her sale was at its height; and for the first time the brightness of her black eyes astonished me, in spite of the thousand other ideas which occupied my mind. I stepped down towards the bench, and as I went up Margaret caught me by the jacket, crying—

"Sir! sir! *What is the Third Estate?* Just look at *What is the Third Estate?* of M. Abbé Sièyes, for six liards."

Then I spoke to her.

"Don't you recognise me, Margaret?"

"Why it is Michel!" said she, letting me go and laughing.

She wiped the perspiration which ran down her brown cheeks, and threw her long black hair all loose on the back of her neck. We were both surprised to find ourselves there.

"How you do work, Margaret! what pains you are taking!" said I.

"Yes," said she, "this is the great day—we must go on selling," and pointing to the bottom of her petticoat, and to her little feet, covered with mud, "Look what a state I am in; we have walked since six yesterday evening; we came from Luneville with fifty dozen

of the *Third Estate*, and we have been selling them all the morning till now! Look here, we have only ten or twelve dozen left."

She looked quite proud of it, and I still held her hand in surprise.

"And where is your father?" said I.

"I don't know; somewhere in the town—about the inns. We shall sell every one of these *Third Estates*. I am sure he has already sold all his copies."

Then suddenly drawing her little hand back—

"Go," said she, "the Baraquins are going into the Hôtel de Ville."

"But I am not twenty-five, Margaret, and I have no vote."

"It is all the same; we are losing time chattering here."

And then she began selling again.

"Here, gentlemen, the *Third Estate*, the *Third Estate*."

I went away astonished. I had always seen Margaret by her father's side, and now she appeared quite another person. I wondered at her courage. I thought to myself, "She would get out of a scrape better than you, Michel."

And even in the crowd, on the balcony, after having rejoined Maître Jean, I kept thinking of it.

"Well?" said he, as soon as I reached him. "Margaret is by herself in the square; her father is somewhere in the town with his books."

At that moment we were going down from the balcony into the great corridor, which led to the prévôt's audience-hall. The Baraquins' turn had come; and as it was necessary to vote out loud, before entering the hall we could easily hear the voting.

“Maître Jean Leroux ! Mathurin Chauvel ! Maître Jean Leroux ! Mathurin Chauvel ! Maître Jean Leroux ! Chauvel !”

Maître Jean, with a very red face, said to me—

“What a pity Chauvel is not here ! how pleased he would be !”

I turned round and saw Chauvel behind me, quite astonished at what he heard.

“You have done this ?” said he to Maître Jean.

“Yes,” said the godfather, very well pleased.

“From you I am not surprised at this,” said Chauvel, shaking hands with him ; “I have known so long what you are. What surprises and delights me is to hear Catholics name a Calvinist. The people are laying aside their old superstitions ; they will gain the day !”

We moved gently forward, and we turned two by two to enter the great hall. Directly afterwards, above the crowd, with their hats off, we perceived M. the Prévôt Schneider, in a black cloak, edged with white, a cap in his hand, and a sword by his side. The échevins and syndics in black coats, a black scarf round the neck, were sitting one step lower. Behind, against the wall, was the large crucifix.

That is all I can remember.

The names of Jean Leroux and Mathurin Chauvel followed like the beat of a clock. The first who said “Nicolas Letumier and Chauvel,” was Maître Jean himself. He was recognised in consequence, and the prévôt smiled. The second who voted for Jean Leroux and Letumier was Chauvel ; he was consequently recognised also ; but M. le Prévôt had known him for a long while, and he did not smile at his name. The

lieutenant, Desjardins, indeed, whispered to him as he leaned over to him.

I had already turned to the right, having no vote to give. Chauvel, Maître Jean, and myself left together; he had much trouble in getting through the crowd again; and even down below, instead of passing out by the place where the voters from Mittelbronn were just arriving, we went out by the back, under the old market. There Chauvel left us directly, saying—

“This evening we will talk it over at the Baraques.”

He had still some little books to sell. Maître Jean and I went thoughtfully home alone. The crowd dispersed; they seemed very tired, but pleased nevertheless. Some had had a glass too much, and sang and danced along the road. My father and Valentine came home later. We might have hunted a long time for them without finding them.

That same evening after supper, Chauvel and his daughter came as usual. Chauvel had a great bundle of paper in his pocket; it consisted of the speeches made by the prévôt and his lieutenant the morning before the elections in the town-hall; and then the procès-verbaux of appearance of the clergy, the nobility, and the third estate. The speeches were very good, and as Maître Jean wondered how men could speak to us so well, and treat us always so ill, Chauvel said, smiling—

“In future words and deeds must correspond. These gentlemen see the people are the stronger, and they take off their hats to them; but the people must be cognisant of their strength, and make use of it; then everything will be as justice wills it.”

XII.

I MUST now mention a circumstance which affects me still when I think of it. It is the happiness of my life.

I must just inform you that in this month of April, those of our province who had been named to draw up the memorial of our complaints and grievances met at the bailiwick of Lixheim. They were lodged in the inn; Maître Jean and Chauvel left every Monday morning, and only returned the following Saturday evening; this lasted three weeks.

You may guess how the mountain was in motion all this time. The cries and disputes over the abolition of the poll and salt tax, of the militia; on the vote by individual or according to rank, and thousands of other things which had never been thought of; crowds of Alsatians and Lorrainers filled the inn; they drank, struck the tables with their fists, and quarrelled like wolves; you would think they were going to throttle one another, and yet they were all of the same mind, like all the labouring class; they wanted what we wanted; without that what fights we should have seen! Valentine and I worked at the forge opposite the house; we mended the carts and shod the horses of all the passers-by; sometimes I tried an argument with Valentine, who thought all was lost if the seigneurs and bishops had the worst of it; I tried to convince him,

but he was such a good fellow that I did not like to annoy him; his only resource was to talk about a hut he had in the wood behind the Roche-Plate, where he caught tomtits; he had also traps in the heather, and snares in the runs, with leave from the inspector, M. Claude Coudray, to whom, from time to time, in return, he carried a string of fieldfares or other birds. This is what touched him most in the midst of this approaching confusion; he only thought about his decoy-birds, and used to cry to me—

“The building time is coming, Michel, and after the nests the catching them with a call; then the flight of fieldfares, which settle in Alsace when the grasses are ripe; the year promises well, and if the fine weather lasts we shall catch plenty.”

His long face grew longer still; he smiled, showing his toothless gums, his eyes became rounder; he seemed to see the fieldfares hanging by the neck in his snares; and he pulled the hair out of all the horses' tails as they went by to make his springes. I was always thinking about the great affairs of the bailiwick, but mostly about the abolition of the militia, for I had to draw in September, and that concerned me more than anything else.

But something else occurred.

For some time, when I went home in the evening, I found Mother Letumier and her daughter spinning with my mother, by the side of my father, Marceline, and little Etienne, who were plaiting baskets; they were quite at home there, and would stay till ten. These Letumiers were people well off for that period; they had some freehold property, and their daughter Annette, a tall fair girl, with hair rather inclining to red, but fresh and

White, was a good creature. I often saw her going and coming past the forge with a small bucket under her arm, as if she was going to fetch water from the fountain; she would look round with a tender air; she had on a short petticoat and red linen corset, with shoulder-straps, and her arms bare up to the elbows.

I saw this without noticing or suspecting anything. In the evening, while watching her spinning, I may have said something gay or trifling, such as boys say to girls in all respect, as is very natural, without thinking more about it.

But one day my mother said—

“Look here, Michel, you had better go and dance to-morrow at the Rondinet de la Cigogne, and put on your velvet jacket, your red waistcoat, and your silver heart.”

I wondered and asked her why, but she only smiled, and said, looking at my father—

“You will see.”

My father was plaiting very thoughtfully; he said to me—

“The Letumiers are rich; you might as well dance with their daughter; she would be a good match.”

It put me out to hear this. I did not dislike the girl, but I never once yet thought of marrying. At last, through curiosity or folly, or because I wanted to please my father, I answered—

“As you will, but I am too young to marry, and I have not drawn for the militia.”

“Well,” said my mother, “it will cost you nothing to go there, and that may please people. It is only a civility after all.”

So I answered—

“Very well.”

And the following Sunday, after vespers, I set off. I go down the hill thinking these things over and wondering what I was about.

At that time old Paquette, widow of Dieudonné Bernel, kept the inn of the Cigogne at Lutzelbourg, a little to the left of the wooden bridge; and behind, where the garden now is, at the foot of the slope, they used to dance under the yoke elm hedges. There were plenty of people, for the curé Christopher was not like so many other curés; he did not choose to see or hear anything, not even Jean Kat’s clarionette. They drank a small Alsatian wine and ate fried fish.

So I go down the street and go up the stair at the bottom of the court, looking at the boys and girls dancing about on the terrace; just as I reached the first parlours Mother Letumier cried—

“This way, Michel, this way.”

Pretty Annette was there; when she saw me she became very red. I took her by the arm and asked her to waltz with me. She cried—

“Oh, M. Michel!” looked up, and followed me.

Girls have been the same in all times, before as after the Revolution: they always like one man better than another.

Well, I waltzed with her four or five times, I cannot exactly say how often, and they laughed. Mother Letumier seemed pleased, Annette was very red, and kept looking down. Of course we did not talk politics; we joked, we drank, and ate a cake together. I thought to myself—

“Mother will be satisfied; they will compliment her on her boy.”

Towards evening, about six, I had enough of it; and without thinking of anything, I went into the street, and turned towards the pine-wood to cut across by the rocks.

It was very warm for the time of year, everything was green and in flower—violets, whortleberries, and strawberry-plants spread over and covered the path with verdure. One would have thought it the month of June. I remember these things as if it were yesterday, yet I am a few years older than I was then—yes, indeed!

At last, once over the rocks on the level, I reach the high road, whence you can see the roofs of the Baraques, and two or three hundred paces before me I see a little girl, white with dust, carrying a heavy square basket over her shoulder, who walked and walked. I said to myself—

“That must be Margaret! Yes, it is!”

And I walk faster—I run.

“Stop! is that you, Margaret?”

She turned round, showing me her brown face shining with perspiration, her hair falling over her cheeks, her bright eyes; she began to laugh, and said—

“Oh, Michel! what a lucky meeting!”

I looked at the thick strap which seemed cutting into her shoulder; I was quite astonished, and ill at ease.

“Why, you look tired,” said she. “Have you been far?”

“No, I come from Lutzelbourg, where I have been dancing,”

“Ah, yes,” said she, walking on. “I come from Dabo. I have been all over the district. I have sold plenty of *Third Estates* down there. I got there just as the parish

deputies met. The day before yesterday I was in Lixheim in Lorraine."

"Are you made of iron?" asked I as I walked along with her.

"Not quite of iron; all the same, I am rather tired; but the great blow has been struck, do you see; it keeps moving!"

She laughed, but was tired, for as she got near the little wall which inclosed Furst's old orchard, she rested her basket on it, and said—

"Let us talk a little, Michel, and take breath."

I took her basket and put it on the top of the wall, saying, as I did so—

"Yes, let us breathe awhile, Margaret; yours is a harder occupation than ours."

"Yes, but we are getting on," said she, with the same voice and look as her father's; "we may say we have made some progress. We have already recovered our ancient rights, and now we are going to ask for others. Everything must be granted—everything. All must be equalised; the taxes must be the same for all; every one must be free to succeed if he has the courage to work, and then we must be free—there!"

She looked at me. I was lost in admiration. I thought to myself—

"What are we in comparison with people like these? What have we either done or suffered for our country?"

Then glancing at me, she continued—

"Yes; that is how it is. Now the memorials are nearly finished, we shall sell thousands of them. In the meantime, I travel about alone. We have only this trade to live by, and I must work for us both now, while father is working for us all. I yesterday took

him twelve livres ; that will make up his week's account. I gained fifteen ; since then I have earned four ; now I have seven livres left. I shall go and see him the day after to-morrow ; that will do, and while the States-General are in session we shall sell all that goes on—to the third estate I mean. We shall not give ground now—no ! Intellect must advance ; everything must be known. Let the people teach themselves. Do you understand ?”

“Yes, yes, Margaret,” said I ; “you talk like your father. I could almost cry.”

She was at that moment seated on the wall by the side of her basket. The sun had just set ; the sky in the distance, in the direction of Mittelbronn, was like gold, veined with red, and the pale and bluish moon, free from clouds, was rising on the left above the old ruins of the Castle of Lutzelbourg. I looked at Margaret, who had ceased speaking, and who was looking at these things with her eyes raised. I continued watching her ; she had her elbow on her basket, and I did not take my eyes off her. She noticed it, and said—

“Ah, I am covered with dust, am I not ?”

Without answering her question, I asked her—

“How old are you ?”

“On Easter Sunday, in a fortnight, I shall be sixteen. How old are you ?”

“I am more than eighteen.”

“Yes, you are strong enough,” said she, springing from the wall and throwing the strap over her shoulder.

“Help me. That's it.”

When I only lifted the basket I felt how terribly heavy it was, and said—

“It is too heavy for you, Margaret. You had better let me carry it for you.”

She walked on stooping, glanced at me, smiled, and said—

“When one works to recover one’s rights, nothing is too heavy, and have them we will.”

I had no answer to make. I felt uncomfortable. I was filled with admiration for Chauvel and his daughter they rose in my estimation.

Margaret seemed tired no longer ; she said from time to time—

“Yes, down at Lixheim these nobles and monks defended themselves well. But they were answered ; they were told what they deserved to hear, and everything will be in the memorial—nothing forgotten. The king will know what we think, and the nation too. But we must see what the States-General are. Father says they will be good ; I believe him. We shall see ; and we will stand by our deputies ; they may trust themselves to us.”

We had just reached Baraques. I accompanied Margaret to her door. It was dark. She took the great key from her pocket, and said as she went in—

“Another day gone. Good night, Michel.”

And I wished her good night.

When I got home, father and mother were there, waiting for me. They looked at me.

“Well ?” said my mother.

“Well, we danced together.”

“And then ?”

“Then I came home.”

“Alone ?”

“Yes.”

“You did not wait for them ?”

“No.”

“And you have said nothing?”

“What would you have me say?”

Then she lost her temper and began to cry.

“Well, you are a fool, and this girl is a greater fool than you are to take a fancy to you. What are we in comparison with them?”

She was green with anger. I looked at her very quietly, without replying. My father said—

“Let Michel alone—don’t call out so loud.”

But she would listen to nothing, and went on—

“Did any one ever see such an idiot? For the last six months I have been coaxing that great hag of a Letumier to come here for the sake of that boy; an old miser, who can only talk of her land, her hemp-field, and her cows! I put up with everything, I take patience, and then, when it is all settled, when he has only to close, this beggar refuses! Perhaps he thinks himself a seigneur, he fancies they ought to run after him. Good heavens! why should I have such people in my family? It makes me shudder!”

I wanted to reply, but she said—

“Hold your tongue; you will die on a dunghill, and so we shall all.”

As I said nothing, she went on—

“Yes, this gentleman refuses. Spend your life, indeed, in bringing up Nicolases and Michels, vagabonds who get kidnapped here and there; there is no want of bad girls in the country! Since he refuses, probably he likes some one else better.”

She turned round with her broom in her hand, and looked at me over her shoulder. I would hear no more, and looking very pale, I went up the ladder. Since

Claude left, Etienne and I slept above under the thatch. I was in despair; mother called after me—

“So you take yourself off. I see it plain enough, don’t I, you bad boy? You dare not stay!”

I was choking with shame. I threw myself down in the great box, with my hands over my face, thinking—

“My God! is this possible?”

And I could hear my mother calling louder and louder—

“The beggar! the idiot!”

My father tried to quiet her. That lasted a long time. My face was wet with tears. About one, everything was at last quiet in the hut, but I could not sleep, I was too unhappy. I thought to myself—

“There! for ten years you have been at work; the others leave home. You stay behind, you pay the family debts, you give up your last liard for the support of the old people, and because you will not marry this girl for the sake of what she has got, because you will not marry the hemp-field, you are no longer good for anything—you are only a Nicolas, a fool, and a beggar!”

I became more and more indignant. Little Etienne slept calmly by my side. I could not close my eyes. From thinking and thinking over these things I was wet with perspiration. I was smothered in this garret. I wanted air.

At last, about four, I rose and went down. My father was not asleep; he asked me—

“Is that you, Michel?—are you going out?”

“Yes, father, I am going out.”

I wished much to talk to him; he was as good and as honest a man as any. But what could I say to him?

My mother was not asleep either ; her eyes shone in the obscurity ; she said nothing, and I went out. Out of doors the fog was rising from the valley. I took the sheep-path under the rocks. The fog soaked through my frock, and cooled my blood. I went straight on. What I was thinking about, now God only knows ! I wanted to leave Baraques and go to Saverne, to Quatre-Vents ; a journeyman blacksmith never wants work. The idea of abandoning my father, Marceline, and little Etienne wrung my heart, but I knew my mother would never get the lands of the Letumiers out of her head, and she would eternally reproach me about them. So many ideas pass through one's brain at such a moment, one thinks no more about them, one tries not to do so, and one forgets them.

All I now recollect is, that about five o'clock, after the dew had fallen, there was a beautiful sunrise, a spring sun. The coolness did me good ; I cried to myself—

“ Michel, you must stay and put up with it. You cannot abandon your father, no, nor Etienne, nor your little sister. It is your duty to support them ; let your mother scold, you must stay.”

And with these ideas in my head I turned back to the village, through the orchards and gardens which lie along the slope. I screwed up my courage. The sun gave more warmth, the birds were singing, everything was bright, the dew hung at the edges of the leaves. I saw, too, the white smoke from our forge slowly rising against the sky. Valentine was up.

I hurried along, and just as I came to the village, I suddenly heard some one digging on the other side of the hedge which bordered the path. I looked ; it was

Margaret, behind their house, planting potatoes in a corner of their orchard. I was surprised when I recollected how late she had returned the evening before; I stood against the hedge for some time looking at her; the more I looked at her the more I admired her.

There she was, brave and busy, in a short petticoat and heavy sabots, thinking of nothing but her work; and I then saw for the first time that her cheeks were brown and round, her forehead small, with beautiful brown hair growing near her eyebrows and on her temples; she was very like her father; she clenched her teeth, and her sabot pressed the spade which broke up the roots in the ground. The sun shone through the apple-trees in flower upon her, with the flickering shadows of the leaves; the earth steamed, everything shone; one felt already it would be very hot.

After looking at Margaret for a long time, my mother's words came into my mind—"He loves another;" and I said to myself, "It is true, he does love another! This one possesses neither fields, meadows, nor cows, but she has courage; she shall be my wife! We shall have the rest in time. But I must first win her, and I will work to win her."

From that moment my ideas were changed; I respected Margaret more than before; I never for a moment entertained the thought that she could be the wife of another.

Having thus come to a resolution, as people were coming down the path to go to work in the fields, I left the spot, having fully made up my mind, full of courage, and even satisfaction. I came into the street; Valentine had been waiting a moment for me before the forge,

his shirt-sleeves tucked up on his long, lean arms, his breast and neck bare.

"What beautiful weather, Michel!" he exclaimed, as he saw me coming. "If it was only Sunday we could take a turn in the wood."

"Yes," I answered, taking off my frock; "but it happens to be Monday, Papa la Ramée. What have you got to do this morning?"

"Old Rautzan brought us last evening two dozen axes to be put to rights, for Harberg, and Christopher Besme's cart wants a new nave."

"Well, then, let us begin."

I never felt so fit for work. The iron was in the fire; Valentine took the tongs and the small hammer, I the sledge, and we began.

Each time in my life that I have seen distinctly what I wanted, and when, instead of star-gazing and going on day after day as usual, I have fixed on anything difficult, and which required both attention and courage, then my good-humour would return to me. I sang, whistled, and wielded my hammer like an old workman. The greatest trouble is to have no fixed idea: now I had one which pleased me immensely.

It must not be supposed my idea could be easily carried out in '89. No! and that very morning about seven, as Margaret passed the forge, with her great basket, going to sell her pamphlets, Valentine himself made me see it was no trifle; he suspected nothing himself, which was what constituted the value of his words.

"See, Michel," said he, pointing out the little girl, who had about reached the hill by the Baraques, "is it not dreadful to see a child of sixteen loaded like that?"

She goes about in rain, in snow, and sunshine; she is a brave one to her finger-tips, she fears no trouble, and if they were not heretics they would be martyrs. But it is the devil that instigates them to sell those bad little books, in order to destroy our holy religion and the order of things in this world as by God established. Instead of a recompense they deserve a rope."

"Oh, Valentine, a rope!"

"Yes, a rope," said he, screwing up his lips, "and even fire and faggots, if they had justice done them. Ought we to take their part when their good sense, honesty, and courage are directed against us? They are like wolves and foxes, the more cunning they are, the more pains we ought to take to destroy them; if they were as silly as sheep they would not be so dangerous; on the contrary, we might shear them and keep them in the fold. But these Calvinists listen to nothing; they are a positive plague."

"But they are all God's creatures like ourselves, Valentine."

"God's creatures!" exclaimed he, extending his long arms. "If they were God's creatures, would the curés refuse to register their births, marriages, and deaths? Would they be buried in the fields, far from consecrated ground, like beasts? Would they be debarred from all employments, as Chauvel himself said? Would everybody cry out against them? No, Michel, no; I am sorry for it, for, excepting their occupation, I have no reproach to make them; but Maître Jean is wrong to have such persons here. That Chauvel will come to a bad end—he does too much! We Baraquins are fools to have named him, for if order is once re-established, I warn you, the first to be seized upon will be Chauvel

and his daughter, perhaps even Maître Jean and all of us, to purge us by a few years in prison. I shall not have deserved it myself, but I can but see the king's justice in it. Justice is justice. We shall have deserved it—it is sad enough—but justice before all.”

He bent his long back, put his two hands together with a resigned air, and then he pensively closed his eyes. I reflected—

“Can any one be such a fool? What he says is contrary to common sense.”

For all that, I saw I should have every one against me if I offered to marry Margaret, and that the Baraquins were capable of stoning me. But it was all the same to me, and I wondered at my own firmness.

The evening of that day, when about to return to our cottage, I set off without dread, determined to hear all my mother had to say, and to make no reply. As I came near the house I met my father, very pale and frightened; he beckoned me into a deep lane between the orchards, where we could not be seen. I followed him, and the poor man said to me, trembling all the time—

“Your mother made disturbance enough yesterday, my boy; how dreadful it is! Now, what are you going to do? Are you going away?”

He looked at me, quite pale. I saw he was in a state of great anxiety, and I replied—

“No, father, no! How could I leave you, little Etienne, and Marceline? It is not to be done!”

Happiness shone in his face—he seemed to revive.

“That is well,” said he. “I knew you would stay, Michel. Yes, I am so glad I spoke to you. She is all in the wrong; she loses her temper too easily. Ah, I

have suffered enough in my lifetime, but it is all right; you stay here; it is all right."

He held me by the hand, and I felt very much affected.

"Yes," said I, "I will stay, father, and if my mother cries out again—why, she is my mother; I shall listen to her without replying."

Then he was reassured.

"That is right," said he. "But listen one minute; you must wait here an instant or two. I will go home alone, for if your mother saw us together I should have a hard time of it. Do you see?"

"Yes, father. Go on."

He then left the lane, and some minutes after I quietly followed him, and went in. My mother was spinning near the hearth, with her mouth shut. She thought, no doubt, that I was going to say something to her—tell her I was going away. Her eyes followed me about, and she seemed preparing to curse me. Little Marcline and Etienne at her feet were plaiting a basket, without daring to look up. My father was chopping firewood, watching me all the while; but I looked as usual, and I only said—

"Good evening, father; good evening, mother. I am very tired. We have had *hard* work at the forge to-day."

I went up the ladder. No one replied. I lay down, satisfied with what I had done. I slept well.

XIII.

THE next day on going to work early I found the Three Pigeons full of people already; they were coming all along the road, some in carts, the others on foot. The news was soon spread that the memorial of our complaints and grievances was nearly finished, and it was to be conveyed to Nancy to be incorporated with those of the other bailiwicks.

Since the election-day many of the deputies to the bailiwick had sent for their wives and children to Lixheim; they were now on their road home, well satisfied to get back to their nests.

They called out as they went by—

“It is finished. The rest are coming this evening; it is all settled.”

Valentine and I were well pleased at soon seeing Maître Jean back at the forge. After working ten years together, it is very dull to remain three weeks alone, and not to see the good-natured fat face which called out from time to time—

“Now, boys, get on!” or, “Stop, let us have a minute to breathe!”

Yes, there is something wanting; one is quite bewildered.

So we hung up our jackets, and talked of the good news, while looking at the crowd which had stopped at the inn, Nicole, and Dame Catherine, who went out

with chairs to help the women to get down from their carts, and then compliments and greetings, for all these women were acquaintances, and since their husbands had been named deputies, they were much more ceremonious, and called one another "madame."

Valentine laughed heartily.

"Look here, Michel," said he, "here is the Countess Gros-Jacques, or the Baroness Jarnique! Look, this is just the time to learn good manners."

He was not deficient in wit when he ridiculed those who were not noble; on the contrary, when he saw the bows they made, he laughed till he cried, and always ended by saying—

"That is as becoming to them as lace to Finaude, Father Benedict's donkey! Oh, the beggars! To think that this sort should dare to revolt against his majesty, the queen, and the highest authorities! Fancy their asking for their rights! I would give you your rights—that I would—I would send you packing, and if you were not satisfied I would double my Swiss guards and my gendarmerie."

He discoursed in this way in a low tone, while he blew the bellows and held the iron in the tongs. I knew all his thoughts, for he was obliged to talk aloud to understand himself; it did me good.

We had begun to work again. The anvil had been heard for three hours, sparks flew, and we were busy with our work, when a shadow was thrown on the little door; I turned round; it was Margaret! She had something in her apron, and said to us—

"I bring you some work; I have broken my spade; could you mend it for me by this evening or to-morrow morning?"

Valentine took the spade, which was all notched, and the socket broken. I was delighted. Margaret looked at me, and I smiled at her as much as to say—

“Be easy ; I will do it for you properly ; you shall see how I work.”

She smiled in return, seeing how pleased I was to do her this little service.

“By this evening or to-morrow morning it is not possible,” said Valentine, “but if you could come to-morrow evening ——”

“Nonsense,” cried I, “it is nothing to do. ’Tis true we are very busy, but Margaret’s spade must be done first.”

“You are very welcome to it,” said he ; “only it will take more time than you think, and we are very busy.”

Margaret laughed.

“So I may reckon on its being done, Michel ?”

“Yes, yes, Margaret, you shall have it this evening.”

She went away, and I fitted the small anvil on its block directly, I put the old iron part in the fire, and I took hold of the bellows-handle. Valentine looked at me with surprise ; my eagerness astonished him ; he said nothing, but I felt my ears were getting red as well as my cheeks. So I began to sing.

And he as usual followed me in the plaintive manner of the old journeymen smiths. Our hammers struck in time, and while thinking I was working for Margaret, my heart overflowed with satisfaction. I do not think I ever worked better in my life ; my hammer left the anvil quicker than it fell ; the iron was spread out as easily as paste.

I hammered my spade first hot, then cold ; I made it

square, rather long, the rib well in the middle, the blade like the tail of a swallow, the neck so round and well welded, that Valentine stopped from time to time to admire my work, and I heard him mutter to himself—

“Every man has his own line. Maître Jean has no equal for making horseshoes, I am best at fellics and tires. Yes, it’s a gift from Heaven, no one can deny it. He is best at spades, pickaxes, and ploughshares; in that he excels; it is a gift of the Lord.”

He came and he went, came again, and sometimes asked me if he should help me.

“No,” cried I, proud and pleased to see my work get on so well.

Then I began singing again.

At last, about five, my spade was finished. It shone like a silver plate, and sounded like a bell. Valentine took it, weighed it in his hand for a long time, and then looking at me, said—

“Old Rebstock, of Ribeaupierre, who sells scythes, spades, and ploughshares, even down to the farthest part of Switzerland, old Rebstock himself would put his big R on this spade, and say, ‘I made this.’ Yes, Michel, the Chauvels may be proud of having a good spade, which will last, maybe, as long as they will. This is your masterpiece.”

You may believe I was satisfied, for Valentine was a good judge, but the satisfaction arising from his praise was nothing to the pleasure I should have in carrying the spade back to Margaret, but it wanted a handle, and I wanted a new one of ash. Without delay I ran to our neighbour, the old turner, Rigaud, who set to work and made me such a handle as I required, light and

strong at the same time. I paid him for it at once, and I went back and put the spade behind the door till the day's work was over.

At seven, while washing my face, neck, and hands at the pump in front of the forge, and chancing to look up the street, I saw Margaret sitting on the bench at their door, peeling potatoes. I showed her the spade from a distance, and I walked up to her quite content, saying—

“Here it is ; what do you think of that, Margaret?”

She took the spade, and looked at it in admiration. I could hardly breathe.

“Ah,” said she, looking at me, “Valentine made this.”

I answered her, quite red in the face—

“So you think I cannot make anything?”

“Oh, no ! but this is so well made. Do you know, Michel, you will make a good workman?”

She smiled, and I was very happy again when she said —

“But this will cost dear ; what do I owe you for it?”

When I heard that I came down from the clouds, and said to her almost angrily—

“Margaret, you want to vex me. What ! I work for you ; I make you a present of a spade ; I am happy to do you a service, and you ask me what it costs !”

Seeing my piteous face, she said—

“But you are unreasonable, Michel ; all work is worth its pay ; and then there is Maître Jean's coke, and your time, which you owe him.”

She was right, and I felt it ; but it did not prevent my saying, “No, no, it is not that !” and even to lose

my temper, when suddenly the father Chauvel in his grey frock, with his stick in his hand, took me by the arm, and said—

“What is all this? what is it, Michel? what are you two disputing about?”

He had just come back from Lixheim, and looked at me good-humouredly; as for me, I could hardly speak; I was terribly embarrassed.

“Why,” said Margaret, “he has mended my spade, and now he won’t be paid for doing it.”

“Nonsense,” said Chauvel; “why?”

A happy idea just came into my head, and I answered—

“No, you must not make me take a denier, Monsieur Chauvel; have you not lent me books often? did you not get my sister Lisbeth a place at Wasselonne? and now don’t you help the whole country to recover its rights? When I work for you it is for friendship’s sake, in gratitude; I should think myself a beggar if I said to you, ‘That costs so and so much.’ It is contrary to my nature.”

He looked at me a moment with his little quick eyes, and said—

“That is all very well, but I do not do these things either that I may not pay people. If I had done so from such a motive I also should think myself a beggar. Do you see, Michel?”

Then, as I did not know what to say, I was ready to cry, and I said—

“Ah, Monsieur Chauvel, you give me pain.”

And he, no doubt touched by that, replied—

“No, Michel, I have no such intention, for I look on you as a brave and honest boy, and to prove it to you I

accept your present. We both of us accept it, don't we, Margaret?"

"Yes," said she, "since it gives him so much pleasure, we cannot refuse it."

Chauvel then looked at the spade, and praised it, saying I was a good workman, and that later he hoped to see me a master, and doing a good business. I had become tranquil; and when he went into his house, and when Margaret had said, "Good night, Michel, and thanks," all was forgotten.

I was pleased at having answered so well, for Chauvel's glance, while I was speaking, had disturbed me, and if my reasons had not been so good he might well have suspected something. I took this as a warning to be prudent, and to conceal my projects about Margaret till the time came for asking her in marriage.

I made these reflections as I went back to the inn. As I entered the large room Maître Jean had just arrived; he was hanging up his great cloak in the wardrobe, and called to Nicole to bring him his knitted jacket and cotton nightcap.

"What a good thing to find oneself in one's old coat and sabots! Ha! Michel, here we are again. The hammers will have to dance again. You must be all behindhand?"

"Not very, Maître Jean; we have got on well with our work. The wedges which came from the Dagsberg were all sent away yesterday evening."

"So much the better."

Dame Catherine now came in quite pleased, and asked—

"Is it all done, Jean, quite done? You will not have to go down there again?"

“No, Catherine, thank God! at the end of it I had had enough of these distinctions. Now our affair is granted; the memorial leaves the day after to-morrow. But it has not been without trouble, and had we not had Chauvel, I do not know where we should be now. What a man he is! he knows everything, he talks on every subject; it is an honour to the Baraques to have sent such a man. All the members of the other bailiwicks have chosen him to carry our complaints and our grievances to Nancy, to support them against whoever should attack them. As long as the Baraques last, never again will they do themselves so much credit as now. Now Chauvel is known everywhere, and that we have sent him, that he resides at Bois-de-Chênes, and that the people in those parts had the good sense to acknowledge his ability in spite of his religion.”

Maître Jean told us all this while putting on his old frock and his sabots.

“Yes,” said he, panting, “out of hundreds of deputies to the bailiwick, the Third Estate has chosen fifteen to take charge of the memorial, and Chauvel is the fourth; therefore, now we have a *fête*, do you see, a gala for the friends of the Baraques, in honour of our deputy, Chauvel; it is all arranged—Letumier and Cochart have been told; I saw them at the Golden Apple in town, and I have invited them and told them to invite others. The old bottles under the faggots must come to light this time, the kitchen must blaze. Nicole must this evening fetch six pounds of good beef, three pounds of cutlets, and two fine legs of mutton from Kountz, under the market. She must say it is for Maître Jean Leroux, of the Three Pigeons. The legs of mutton must be dressed with garlic. We must have

sausages or cabbages, and we must hand down our largest ham, and a good salad, some cheese and nuts; every one must be pleased. I want the whole country round to know that the Baraques have the honour of sending the fourth deputy of the bailiwick to Nancy—a man unknown to others, but whom we know, whom we have chosen, and who of himself alone has done more to support the rights of the people than fifty others. But we will talk about that by-and-by. Chauvel shut the mouth of the oldest lawyers, of the sharpest advocates, and the most cunning rich ones of the province.”

Maître Jean had certainly had a glass or two on his road, for he talked by himself, stretching out his great hands, and blowing out his red cheeks, as he always used to do after a good dinner. We listened in astonishment and admiration.

Nicole laid the cloth for supper; that caused a silence; each was thinking over what he had just heard.

As I was leaving, Maître Jean said—

“You must tell your father that he is invited by his old comrade, Jean Leroux—for we are old comrades; we drew for the militia together, in '57—do you hear, Michel?”

He held me by the hand, and I replied—

“Yes, Maître Jean, you pay us a great compliment.”

“When one invites good and honest people like you, one does honour and gives pleasure to oneself—and now good night.”

Then I went home. Maître Jean, my godfather, had never before said such kind things about my father to me, and I loved him, if possible, better than I ever had done.

XIV.

WHEN I went home I told my parents that my father and myself were invited to dine with Maître Jean and the Baraques notables the following day. They understood what an honour it was for us, and my father was much affected by it. He talked for a length of time about his drawing for the militia in the year '57, when Jean Leroux and he walked about the town arm-in-arm with ribbons in their hats; and again at my christening, when his old comrade undertook to be god-father; he recalled the smallest details in these recollections, and exclaimed—

“Ah, the good times, the good times!”

My mother was satisfied too, but as she was angry with me, instead of showing her contentment, she went on spinning and said nothing. Nevertheless, next morning our white shirts and gala clothes were ready on the table; she had washed and dried everything and got everything ready in good time, and as at midday my father and I walked down the street arm-in-arm, she watched us from the door, and cried out to her neighbours—

“They are going to the great dinner of the notables, at Jean Leroux’s.”

My poor father, leaning on my arm, said with a smile—

"We are as fine as the day of the elections. Since then no harm has happened to us; let us hope it may continue so, Michel. We should pay attention to what we say; one always says too much at a great dinner; we had better take care; don't you think so?"

"Yes, father; be easy; I shall say nothing."

He trembled still, just like a poor hare hunted for years from bush to bush; and how many others were at that time like him? Nearly all the old peasants who had been brought up at the feet of the seigneurs and convents, and who knew but too well there was no justice for them.

In undertaking a thing, young men should begin in company with resolute men like Chauvel, who neither change nor give way. If the peasants had to make the revolution of '89 by themselves, and if the citizens had not begun it, we should still be in '88. How can they help it? Suffering at last destroys courage, confidence comes from success, and then again they had no instruction whatever. But this day we had to see what good wine could do. We were more than a hundred paces from the inn when we heard the shouts of laughter and the jokes of the notables who had got there before us. The tall Letumier, Cochart, Claude Huré, the wheelwright, Gauthier Courtois, the old gunner, and Maître Jean were standing talking at the corner of the great table, covered with its white cloth, and when we went in we were quite dazzled by the decanters, bottles, old painted earthenware plates, the forks and spoons newly tinned, and which glittered from one end of the room to the other.

"Ha! here is my old comrade, Jean-Pierre," cried Maître Jean as he came to meet us.

He had on his blacksmith's jacket with hussar buttons, his wig curled and tied in a great bow at the back of his head, his shirt open, the stomach well rounded in his wide breeches, woollen stockings, and shoes with silver buckles. His great cheeks shook with satisfaction, and as he laid his hands on my father's shoulders, he said—

“Ah, my poor Jean-Pierre, how glad I am to see you!” cried he; “how everything comes back to me when I see you!”

“Yes,” said my father, with tears in his eyes; “the good time of the militia, eh, Jean? I sometimes think of it; we shall see it no more.”

But Letumier, his hat over his ear, and his large cinnamon-coloured coat hanging over his lean thighs, his red waistcoat and steel buttons, which tinkled like cymbals, began to shout—

“It is come back already, Jean-Pierre! We all of us won at the militia-drawing the day before yesterday. The country has won! hurrah!”

He raised his hat towards the ceiling, and the others laughed to see the row of bottles. Their hearts felt light. Each one in the circle turned aside from time to time as if to blow his nose, and counted the bottles out of a corner of his eye.

At the end of the room the kitchen door was open; we could see the great fire on the hearth, and two legs of mutton turning gently on the spit, the fat falling sputtering into the dripping-pan; Dame Catherine, in a great white cap, her sleeves tucked up, coming and going, a dish or perhaps a tart in her apron; and Nicole, with a large fork, turning the meat in the saucepans, or shaking the salad-basket in the corner

The good smell came in strong; one would never have thought that Maître Jean would have treated simple notables in such style; but this careful and laborious man disregarded expense on great occasions, and what greater occasion could he find to gain the goodwill of the country round than to entertain well those who had named him and his friend Chauvel to the bailiwick? All good citizens of my time have done the same; it is the best way to preserve their class; they had the good sense to put themselves at the head of the people; and when their sons, through avarice and folly, sought to separate from them, to become, as it were, sham nobles, they worked for others who were sharper than they. This is our history in few words.

The old people assembled near the window had again begun to discuss the business of the bailiwick, and every time a notable came in there was a cry of—

“Ha, Pletché! ha, Rigaud! this way, this way; how goes it?”

Valentine, in the background, looked at me and laughed. But his enthusiasm for the king, the queen, and the authorities on high was no bar to his love for good wine, sausages, and ham—in fact, the idea of such a *fête* seemed especially pleasing to him, and he occasionally turned his long nose very complacently in the direction of the kitchen.

At last, just on the stroke of twelve, Nicole came to tell me to call Chauvel, and I was going out to do so, when he quietly walked in with Margaret. All the others cried out—

“Here he is, here he is!”

He shook hands, smiling, with them all; but he was no more the same man, and the prévôt's lieutenant had

no longer the power to take him by the collar ; he was among the chosen fifteen for Nancy, and one could easily see it in his looks ; his small eyes were brighter than ever ; and his shirt-collar, white as snow, stuck up under his ears.

When Letumier, who was fond of ceremony, was preparing to make him a speech, he laughed, and said—

“Maître Letumier, the soup smells good.”

And so it did. Dame Catherine entered with the great soup-tureen, which she placed with dignity on the table.

Maître Jean called out—

“Sit down, my friends, sit down ; Letumier, you shall make your speech at dessert ; a hungry stomach has no ears ; here, Cochart ! Chauvel, there at the head of the table ; Valentine ! Huré ! Jean-Pierre !”

At last he got us all into our places, and we began to think about enjoying ourselves. My father, Valentine, and I were opposite Maître Jean, who helped. He took the cover off the big tureen, the savory smell of mutton-soup rose to the ceiling like a cloud, and the plates were passed round.

I had never seen such a grand dinner ; I was lost in admiration, and so was my father.

Each man has a bottle by him ; let him help himself to a glass.

Of course after their soup they drew the corks and filled their glasses ; some wanted to drink the health of the deputies, but this was the small Alsatian wine, and Maître Jean said—

“Wait ! you must drink our healths in good wine, and not in the ordinary sort.”

They thought he was right, and the bouilli with

parsley sauce having been put on table, each one had his slice.

Letumier said that every man who worked in the fields ought to have half a pound of such meat and a quart of wine at every meal; the woodcutter Cochart thought he was quite right; and then they began talking politics till the arrival of the fried sausages and choucroute, which changed the current of ideas of many.

Margaret and Nicole hurried round the table, replacing the empty bottles by full ones; Dame Catherine brought in the dishes, and about one, when the legs of mutton were put on table, accompanied by old Ribeaupierre wine, our satisfaction was at its height; Cochart said, as we looked at one another with a self-satisfied air—

“We are men! we have the rights of men! If any one chooses to assert the contrary let him meet me in the wood and I will give him his answer.”

And the old gunner, Gauthier Courtois, cried—

“If we are not men, it is because the others always have good wine and good food for themselves; before a battle they could condescend to flatter us and promise us whatever we wished for. But after, they talked of discipline and beat us with the flat side of their swords as much as before. I say it is disgraceful to beat soldiers, and not to allow those who show courage to become officers, because they are not noble.”

Letumier saw everything favourably.

“Distress is at an end,” said he; “our memorials are drawn up; they will see what we want; and our good king will be compelled to say, ‘These people are right, quite right; they want equal taxation and

equality before the law, and it is only just.' Are we not all Frenchmen? ought we not to have the same rights when we support the same weight of taxation? That is only common sense."

He spoke very well, opening his large mouth as far as his ears, half-closing his eyes, throwing his head back, and throwing his arms about, like those who have facility in speaking; every one listened to him; and my father, after nodding two or three times, whispered to me—

"He speaks well; it is quite true, but don't say anything, Michel; it is too dangerous."

He looked every minute in the direction of the door, as if he expected to see the sergeants of police walk in.

Then Maître Jean, having filled all the glasses with old wine, called out—

"My friends, here is the health of Chauvel, he who supported us better than any one at the bailiwick; may he live long to defend the rights of the Third Estate, and may he always speak as well as he has spoken; that is my wish—to his health!"

Every one leaned over the table and drank with pleasure, laughed, and cried—

"To the health of our deputies, Maître Jean and Chauvel!"

The windows of the large room shook again; people in the street stopped, and pressed their noses against the panes of glass, thinking—

"Those fellows crying out in there are well off."

The notables having taken their seats, glasses were filled again, while Catherine and Nicole brought great tarts and cream, and Margaret removed the remains of the legs of mutton, hams, and salad. All

eyes were directed to Chauvel to see if he was going to return thanks; he sat quietly at the top of the table, his cotton cap on the back of his chair, his cheeks pale, and his lips closed, looking as if he squinted, and held his glass in his hand, deep in thought; without doubt the Ribcaupierre wine had roused him somewhat, for instead of returning thanks and drinking the healths of the others, he said, in a distinct tone of voice—

“Yes! the first step has been taken; but we must not yet sing the song of victory; there is still much to be done before we can have our rights again. The abolition of privileges, poll-tax, subsidies, salt-tax, tolls, and *corvées* is a great deal to demand; the others will not yield easily what they hold. No! they will fight, they will defend themselves against justice, and we must make them submit. They will call to their assistance all those in office, and who live by their situations, who seek to ennoble themselves; and, my friends, that is only the first move; it is but a very small thing; I take it for granted that the Third Estate shall win this first battle; the people wills it; the people which has to support these unjust burdens will sustain its deputies.”

“Yes! yes! till death!” cried Letumier, Cochart, Huré, and Maître Jean, clenching their fists; “we shall win—we are determined to win!”

Chauvel did not stir; when they had done crying out, he went on as if no one had spoken—

“We may carry the day, through all the acts of injustice which the people resent, and which are too glaring, too conspicuous; but how shall we be the better for that, if, by-and-by, the States-General dissolved, and the money voted for the debt, the nobles

should again acquire their rights and privileges? It would not be the first time, for we have had States-General before, and all that they had settled in the people's favour has long ceased to exist; what we must do, after having abolished privileges, is to put it out of all power to re-establish them; this power is in the people—in our armies; this must be our bill, not for a day, a month, a year, but always; you must hinder rogues and cheats from quietly, gently, and indirectly re-establishing what the Third Estate, backed up by the people, has overthrown! The army must be ours; and for the army to be ours, the lowest soldier must have it in his power, if endued with courage and conduct, to rise from step to step till he arrives at the rank of constable or marshal, as well as the nobles. Do you understand me?"

"Chauvel's health," cried Gauthier Courtois.

But he waved his hand to stop the others from replying, and continued—"Then the soldiers will no longer be stupid enough to support the nobility against the people; they will be with us and will remain with us; and then, listen to this, it is the principal thing: that the army and the people may be deceived no longer, that they may be no longer blinded to such a point as to destroy their advancement and protect those who fill the employments which they ought to have, there must be freedom of speech and freedom of writing for every one. If any one acts unjustly by you, to whom do you appeal? To your superior; your superior always decides against you; it is very plain; the employé does as he is directed; but if you could appeal to the people, if the people appointed the superior officers, then they would no longer dare to be unjust; nor

could they do so, since you could bring your employés to reason by withdrawing your support. But instruction is necessary to the people for the understanding of these things, and for this reason did instruction seem to the nobles to be so dangerous; for this reason did they preach 'happy the poor in spirit' in the churches; for this reason have we so many laws against books and newspapers; for this reason those who seek to enlighten us are compelled to take refuge in Switzerland, Holland, or England. Many have died in want; but no, such men never die; they are always in the midst of the people to sustain them, but they must be read, they must be understood; it is to their health I now drink!"

Then Chauvel extended his glass to us, and we all cried together—

"To the health of brave men."

Many were ignorant to whom Chauvel alluded, but they called out all the same, and made such a noise, that at last Dame Catherine came to warn us that half the village was under the windows, and that one would think we were rebelling against the king. Valentine left directly, and my father looked at me to know if it was time for us to escape.

"All right, Catherine," said Maître Jean; "we have said what we had to say; now there has been enough of it."

Every one was silent; they passed round baskets of nuts and apples; outside in the street were heard the plaintive tones of a hurdy-gurdy.

"Ah," said Letumier, "there's Mathusalem;" and Maître Jean called out—

"That is right; bring him in; he comes in time."

Margaret went out directly and brought in old

Mathusalem, who was known to everybody; his real name was Dominique Saint-Fauvert, and all the old people said they had never known so old a man to get about; he was a hundred years old; his face was so yellow and so wrinkled that it looked like a gingerbread cake, and one could hardly make out the shape of his nose and his chin, and the place where his eyes ought to be, so covered were they by his eyebrows, as shaggy as a poodle's. He had on a grey felt hat, the point raised like a vizor, with a cock's feather in it; his frock-sleeves and his breeches were fastened with strings down his legs like network, and the airs he played dated back at least to the time of the Swedes; one felt inclined to cry as soon as one heard them.

"Ah, Mathusalem! is that you?" said Maître Jean; "walk in, walk in."

He handed him a large glass full of wine, which old Dominique took, and acknowledged by three bows; he then shut his eyes and drank it gently off. Dame Catherine, Margaret, and Nicole stood behind him, and we looked on quite affected.

When he returned the glass, Maître Jean asked him to sing something. But old Mathusalem replied he had not sung for many years; and while we were still under the influence of the same feelings, he began to play an air so old and so tender that no one recognised it; they looked at one another. All at once my father called out—

"Ah! it is the air of 'The Peasants.'"

And the rest said—

"Yes, yes, it is the air of 'The Peasants;' Jean-Pierre, you must sing it."

I did not know my father could sing well; I had never heard him; he said—

"I have forgotten it all; I don't remember the first words."

But as Chauvel pressed him, and as Maître Jean said that in former years he had never heard any one sing better than Jean-Pierre, at last, with rather red cheeks and downcast eyes, he gave a gentle cough, and said—

"Since you absolutely insist upon it—well, I will try and recollect it."

And then he sang the air of "The Peasants," accompanied by the hurdy-gurdy, with a voice so soft and sad, that we fancied we could see our poor forefathers scratching the ground and harnessing their wives to the plough; and then the pillaging soldiery come and rob them of their crops; and then their straw-built villages on fire, the fruits of their harvest fly away in sparks, their wives and daughters dragged into by-places, and famine, disease, executions—all these horrors—so it lingered on.

In spite of the good wine I had drunk I was already in tears, with my face on the table, while Letumier, Huré, Cochart, Maître Jean, and two or three others sang the chorus as if they were singing at the funeral of their father and mother.

Margaret sang too; her voice rose above the others, like the voice of a woman who was being harnessed or dragged off; it was dreadful, and made my hair stand on end.

When I looked round I saw we were all as pale as death. Chauvel at the end of the table clenched his teeth and glared about him like a wolf.

At last my father ceased. The hurdy-gurdy groaned on. Chauvel said—

"Jean-Pierre, you sang well; you sang like one of our forefathers, because you have experienced the same things, and our forefathers and grandfathers, and all the men and women from whom we derive our existence for the past thousand years, have felt them."

As every one was silent, he cried out—

"The one song is over; some one must give us another!"

And then at once all those present, and I first of all, cried out—

"Yes, let us have another song; we have suffered too much!"

"We shall see about that soon," said Chauvel. "Now, Dame Catherine has warned us not to make a noise, and she is right. Here it does no good."

Maître Jean then thundered out the blacksmith's song by himself. Valentine just came in, and we accompanied him together, and this song enlivened us a little. It was rather sad too, but it had life in it; the chorus was that the smith forges iron, which left much to be implied, and made us smile. That day many other songs were sung, and some good ones; but my father's song I shall never forget, and when I think of it I cry still—

"Oh, great and holy Revolution! let that French peasant who denies you learn his forefathers' song, and if that song does not convert him, let him, his children, and descendants sing it again on the land; then perhaps may they understand it, and their ingratitude meet its reward."

It was late that day before my father and I returned to the village. The next day, April 10th, 1789, Chauvel left for Nancy. The States-General were not distant.

XV.

AFTER Chauvel left us, for some days we talked of nothing but the business of the great bailiwick, and chiefly of the incorporation of the three orders in one, at the States-General. This was one of the most important discussions I ever knew in my life.

As the king's ordonnance had declared that the Third Estate should be doubled—that is, we should have as many deputies as the two other orders together—we desired to vote man by man, to abolish privileges, in spite of all the nobles and bishops could say ; but they, as they tenaciously held to their ancient rights, insisted on voting by orders, because they were then sure of being in a majority against us, and of always having two votes to one.

You should have seen the indignation of Maître Jean, Letumier, Cochart, and all the notables assembled in the yard of the Three Pigeons, under the great oak, for, some days since, they had set the benches and tables out of doors in the evening on account of the fresh air. The heat in April was as great as the wind and rain in May, 1789 ; everything was green and in flower ; the birds had already built their nests by the 15th. I remember Valentine and I worked at the forge in nothing but our frocks and breeches ; our shirts were hung up behind the door. Maître Jean, red and

glowing with health, called me out every moment, crying—

“Come here, Michel, come here!”

And I had to pump on his bald head and his shoulders. That was his fashion of cooling himself. Madeleine Rigaud, the wife of the turner opposite, used to laugh at him.

This is to tell you how hot it was, and after eight o'clock, when the moon was up, we were glad to be in the cool air, drinking one's wine or cider in the yard, behind the trellis.

All along the street the women and girls were spinning at their doors and enjoying the fine weather. We could hear them talking and laughing a long way off, and the dogs barking, and the neighbours could also hear us disputing; but that was nothing; we began to feel more confident.

Margaret came occasionally; we talked and laughed together by the hedge, while Letumier would hammer the table with his fists, and cry—

“It is all over! It cannot last long! It must be conceded that we are everything.”

And Dame Catherine would say—

“For Heaven's sake, Maître Letumier, don't break our table; it does not want to vote by orders!”

So things went on, and I do not remember ever to have been happier than when I used to talk to Margaret, without daring to tell her that I was in love with her; I never enjoyed greater happiness. But one evening about eight o'clock, we were in the yard leaning about, and the moon was just over the tree. Letumier was making a noise, and Cochart, with his hooked nose in his red beard, his pipe between his

teeth, and his eyes round, like an owl's, was smoking, with his elbows on the table. No one suspected anything, and Cochart least of all, though he had had a lucky chance that day. The occupation of a wood-cutter was not very profitable, as you may believe; but he sometimes passed the line of the customs authorities, and went to Graufthal for a bag of good tobacco, which he sold very well in the neighbourhood, the best red at four sous a pound instead of twenty, and the best black at three sous instead of fifteen.

The discussions on politics seemed likely to last till ten, when the trellis-gate in the street opened, and a man in plain clothes and two sergeants of the customs walked gently into the yard and looked us over. It was fat Mathurin Poulet, cellarist of the *Porte de l'Allemagne*, with his little cocked hat at the back of his head, his yellow wig twisted up in a coil under it, his great red nose in the air, his ox eyes shining in the moonlight, his double chin in his shirt-frill, and his paunch beyond his knees—a terrible eater. He would have six sausages cut up in a salad-dish with white beans and oil, a three-pound loaf, and two pots of beer for his breakfast; and as much for his dinner, with several slices of ham or mutton in addition, with cheese and onions besides. Believe if you can, then, how the profits of a cellarist enabled him to live! Nor did Poulet care either for father or mother nor any other relations when the salad-dish was to be replenished. He would have informed against his Creator to get the reward, and though he looked stupid, he was as cunning as a fox in detecting cheats and hunting up smugglers. He thought of nothing else all day and all night, and lived by informing as others do by their work. See

what it was to have to nourish such a stomach as his; the heart makes its habitation in the stomach, as it were, and one thinks of nothing else but eating and drinking.

Two sergeants followed him, dressed, as all sergeant inspectors were, in white coats with yellow facings, which gave them the name of "bands of bacon," their hats set across the shoulders, and their swords dangling against the calves of their great legs. They were five feet six each, and both strongly pitted by the small-pox. Before the Revolution almost every one was thus disfigured; pretty girls ran the risk of losing their beauty, and good-looking men too. There were plenty then who had lost one eye or both from that dreadful complaint, and God only knows what trouble it was to obtain the adoption of vaccination, perhaps greater than the introduction of potatoes. People always begin by rejecting what does them service. What a misfortune it is!

Well, these people came in, and Poulet, about four paces from the table, seeing Cochart, said, with satisfaction—

"There he is—we have him!"

There was a general cry of indignation in the yard; for a long time Cochart brought Poulet his tobacco for nothing. But Poulet did not make himself uneasy about such a trifle, and said to the sergeant—

"That's he—bring him along!"

The two seized on Cochart, who began to call out, letting his pipe fall—

"What do you want with me? what have I done?"

The sparks from the pipe flew about our feet, we

looked frightened at one another, and Poulet laughed, and answered—

“We have come to fetch the two bags of tobacco which you brought from Graufthal yesterday; you know—the two bags of tobacco which are on the right as you enter your loft, behind the chimney under the slates.”

We then knew that poor Cochart had been informed against by some envious neighbour; every one shivered; it was a case of the galleys!

No one dared to move, for offering any resistance to the revenue officers was a worse affair than even now; not only did they take houses and lands, but if they were in want of rowers anywhere, at Marseilles or Dunkirk, they sent you there, and you were never heard of again. This had happened several times in the mountain, and even at the Baraques, to the son of old Genevieve Paquette; on Poulet's information he had been convicted of smuggling salt; and since then, people said that François was in the country where they grew pepper and cinnamon. Genevieve lost all her property in the expenses of the trial; she had become infirm, and was a beggar.

You may now understand people's terror.

“Come,” cried Poulet, “search!”

And Cochart, holding on by the table, and panting, cried—

“I won't go!”

Letumier had no desire to say a word, and was as silent as a carp at the bottom of a pail. All these noisy fellows, when they see a sergeant, or the gendarmes, become cautious, and often those of whom it is least expected display courage.

By dint of pulling and shaking him the two sergeants had nearly dragged Cochart from his bench ; Poulet cried—

“Another pull—that will do it,” when Margaret, who was sitting by me against the trellis, raised her voice in the midst of the silence, and said—

“Take care, M. Poulet ; you have no right to arrest this man !”

Every one round the table, at the door, Maître Leroux, Letumier, Dame Catherine, Nicole, pale with fear and pity, turned round in a fright. They knew Margaret’s voice, but they could hardly credit her courage ; they shuddered at it. Poulet, with his nose in the air, like the others, looked astounded ; such a thing had never happened to him before ; he called out—

“Who was that speaking just now ? Who dares to oppose the administration ?”

Margaret quietly answered from her place—

“It is I, Monsieur Poulet ; Margaret Chauvel, the daughter of Chauvel, deputy for the Third Estate to the great bailiwick at Nancy. In what you are now doing you are in the wrong, seriously in the wrong, M. the Cellarist, to arrest a man who is a notable, without the express order of the prévôt.”

She rose, and went up to the cellarist and the two sergeants, who turned round and looked at her from under their great cocked hats, without loosing their hold on Cochart.

“You do not, then, know the king’s ordonnance,” said she ; “you arrest people on your exchequer business after six o’clock, when the ordonnance forbids it ;

and you want to oblige them to open their doors to you at night. Why, all evil-doers could say, ‘We belong to the revenue—open your door!’ They might rob a village at their leisure, if the ordonnance did not forbid what you do; and did not the edict direct that you should be accompanied by two *échevins*, and come in the day-time?”

She spoke distinctly, and without being embarrassed, just as Chauvel himself; and Poulet seemed confounded that any one should dare to address him; indignation made his cheeks tremble. Every one took courage. A great noise was heard out in the street while Margaret was speaking, and as she ended a sad and plaintive voice was heard, the voice of old Genevieve Paquette, crying out—

“Ah, the robber! ah, the wretch! What! is he come again? He wants fathers of families as well as the children!”

The poor old woman shook her crutch above the hedge, and amid cries and sobs she continued—

“It is you who took my boy—my poor François! It is you who drove me to want. Ah, God is expecting you—he is waiting for you—all is not over yet—the unfortunate will be there!”

It gave me the horrors to hear her. Some turned pale, and Poulet looked and listened to the noise in the street. The sergeants turned round too. At that moment Maître Jean rose, and said—

“M. Poulet, listen to that poor creature’s voice! It is awful! No one here could bear to have such a thing on their conscience; it breaks one’s heart to hear it.”

Genevieve Paquette cried no longer, but she sobbed,

and you could hear her crutches as she slowly went up the street.

"Yes," cried Maître Jean, "it is frightful. Think well of what you are about. We live in difficult times for all of us, more especially so for officers of the revenue. The cup is full; take heed it does not run over. Five times already have you been here at night, and you have also made visits at Lutzelbourg last winter after midnight to search for smuggled goods. If people at last tire of this, if they end by resisting you, what are we good citizens to do? Are we to render help to you, acting in opposition to the king's edict? Are we to help those who trample on edict and ordonnance, or those who defend their rights? In the name of heaven think what you do! I only ask that, Monsieur Poulet."

He sat down again. The noise in the street increased. A great many people were looking over the hedge and listening. Cochart cried—

"I won't go! I stand by the ordonnance!"

Poulet, seeing that the two sergeants began to reflect, and were looking about them without daring to put his orders in execution, suddenly recollected Margaret, and turned on her in a rage, crying out—

"So we owe this to you, you Calvinist! We should have had no trouble but for this breed of wretches."

He walked up to her, his face and neck scarlet, like a great turkey-cock running after children. He was going to give her a push, when he saw me behind her in the shadow. I don't know how I was there, in my shirt-sleeves. I looked at him, and thought to myself—

"You wretch! I pity you if you touch her!"

I could feel his great neck in my hands as if in a vice. He saw it and turned pale.

"Come," said he, "never mind: we will come back to-morrow!"

The two sergeants, seeing the crowd leaning over the hedge and so many eyes glistening in the dark, seemed well satisfied to go. They let go Cochart, who stood up again, his frock torn, and his cheeks and forehead covered with sweat.

I never stirred. Margaret then turned round and saw me. Many others were looking at me. I might say I was sorry to see the fat cellarist go off with the sergeants. That evening I should have enjoyed a fight. Men are strange creatures! How our ideas alter with our years! But we have not always the arms and shoulders of eighteen and the hands of a smith, nor does one think of showing one's strength or one's courage to the woman one loves! At last they all went. Margaret said, laughing—

"They are going, Michel."

And I answered—

"That is the best thing they can do."

But they were hardly outside before hisses and shouts of laughter were heard from one end of Baraques to the other. Cochart, still in disorder, emptied his jug at a draught, and Margaret said to him—

"Get your smuggled goods into the wood as fast as you can. Make haste."

She looked so happy, and poor Cochart, how pleased he was! I am sure he wanted to thank her, but he was terrified still. He ran away up the street without stopping to say good day or good evening.

Everybody in the yard cried out, "Victory!"

Poulet and his two sergeants, who went across the fields, must have heard us far off, as far as the little alley of the cemetery near the town. The wretches must have been very vexed at missing their prey.

Maître Jean called for cider, and for a long time we talked round the table of what had just happened. Every one had something to say, even those who had hardly dared to breathe, like the rest; but all acknowledged Margaret's courage and good sense.

Maître Jean cried—

“It is the old man's genius which is in her. He will laugh when he hears the way she talked to the revenue officers, and how she obliged them to let Cochart go. It will delight him.”

I listened in silence, close to Margaret. I was the happiest lad in the country. And very late, after ten, when the others were all gone and Maître Jean closed his door, crying, “Good night, friends, good night! What a fine day's work!” and some went off right and left by twos and threes, Margaret and I last of all left the yard, shut the trellis-gate, and slowly took the road to the village.

We were both of us thoughtful, looking at this fine moonlight night, the trees throwing their shadows across the road, and the countless stars overhead. It was absolute silence; not a leaf stirred; some old women wished us good night, and in front of Chauvel's house, under the hedge of their little sloping orchard, the spring which flowed out of the bank through the old pipe bubbled in its trough, nearly level with the ground.

I see the water flowing over the trough; the water-cresses and the iris which cover the rotten old pipe;

the shadow of the great apple-tree at the corner of the house, and the moon, which was reflected in the trough like a looking-glass; everything is quiet; Margaret looks on a moment, and then says—

“How quiet everything is, Michel!”

Then she stoops with her little hand on the pipe and her mouth under it, her beautiful hair falling down her cheeks and over her pretty brown neck, and she drinks. I look at her in ecstasy. All of a sudden she stands up, wipes her chin with her apron, and says—

“Yes, Michel, all the same, you are the boldest of all the village lads. I saw you well enough behind me; you did not look very kind—no; and that is the reason Poulet was in such a hurry to go after looking at you!”

She began to laugh, and while I was delighted to hear her in the quiet street, she asks me—

“But tell me, Michel, what were you thinking about to make such a face as that?”

“I was thinking if he had the misfortune to touch you, or say even a word to shock you, that he was a lost man.”

Then she looks at me again, and her cheeks grow red.

“But you would have been sent to the galleys.”

“What would that have mattered? I should have killed him first.”

How all this comes back to me after the lapse of so many years! I can hear Margaret's voice; every word is now in my ear, and the small murmur of the spring, all, all comes back. Oh, love! what a pleasant thing! Margaret was then sixteen; for me she has never grown old.

We stood dreaming there an instant, and then Margaret turned towards their door; she said nothing; but just as she opened it, with her foot in the passage, she turned round and stretched out to give me her little hand, saying—

“Come, good night, Michel, and thanks.”

And I felt her press my hand. I was very much troubled at it. After the door was closed I stood for two minutes listening to Margaret moving about their cottage, go upstairs, and then seeing the lamp lighted through the cracks in the shutters, “Now she is going to bed,” said I to myself, and I set off, saying in my inmost soul, “Now she knows you love her.”

I have never since felt similar agitation or similar enthusiasm.

XVI.

I HAD made up my mind that Margaret should be my wife. I had arranged everything in my head, and said to myself, "She is still too young, but in fifteen months, when she is eighteen, and when she comprehends that being married will contribute to her happiness, as all girls do, and when I tell her I love her, we shall come to an understanding; then we shall have a great battle. My mother will make a great noise; she would not have anything to do with a Calvinist; and the curé and all the people of the village will be against me; but never mind! my father will always be on my side, for I can make him understand that it is a question of being happy for life, and that I cannot exist without Margaret. Then he will take courage, and in spite of all opposition I shall carry the day. After that we will rent a small forge, either on the road to Quatre-Vents, at La Roulette, or on the road to Mittelbronn, at Maisons-Rouges, and we will work for ourselves; carriers and waggons will not fail us; we might even keep a little inn, like Maître Jean; we shall be the happiest pair in the world; and if we have the good luck to have a child, in a fortnight or three weeks I shall take it in my arms, I shall quietly go to Baraques and say to my mother, "Here it is—curse it!" and she will begin to cry, and

make a noise ; then she will be pacified, and in the end she will come and see us, and all will be made up !”

I fancied all this to myself, with tears in my eyes ; and I thought too that Father Chauvel would be pleased to have me for a son-in-law. What could he have much better than a good workman, hard-working, saving, and capable of putting money by ; a plain and honest man like myself ? I felt sure he would give his consent ; everything seemed reasonable, and I became quite affected at my own happy imagination.

Unhappily, things happen in this world when they are the least expected.

One morning, five or six days after the arrival of the revenue officers, we were shoeing the old Jew Schmoul’s cart-horse in front of the forge, when the woman Steffen came in from the Baraques. She was returning from selling her eggs and vegetables in the town market, and said to Maître Jean—

“ Here is something for you.”

It was a letter from Nancy, and Maître Jean cried out—

“ I bet it comes from Chauvel ! Read it to us, Michel ; I have no time to look for my spectacles.”

I opened the letter, but had scarcely read the two first lines when my knees began to tremble, and I felt a cold shiver all over my body. Chauvel informed Maître Jean that he had just been named deputy from the Third Estate to the States-General, and begged him to send Margaret to the inn of the Plat d’Etain, Rue des Vieilles-Boucheries, at Nancy, as they were to set out together for Versailles.

That is all I can recollect of a tolerably long letter. I continued to read without understanding it, and at

last I sat down on the anvil quite upset. Maître Jean crossed the street, calling out—

“Catherine, Chauvel is named deputy for the Third Estate to the States-General.”

Valentine joined his hands together and stammered—

“Chauvel at court, among the seigneurs and the bishops! Oh, Lord!”

And old Schmoulé, the Jew, said—

“Why not? he is a sensible man, a true man of business; he is as fit for that place as any one.”

I was in great trouble. I kept saying to myself—

“Now it is all over—all is lost; Margaret is going away, and I am left behind.”

I had a great mind to cry, but shame prevented me; I reflected—

“If they know you love her the whole country will laugh at you. What is a journeyman blacksmith compared to the daughter of a deputy of the Third Estate? Nothing at all. Margaret is up in the sky and you down on the ground.”

My heart was broken.

The street was already full of people, Dame Catherine, Nicole, Maître Jean, and the neighbours crying out—

“Chauvel is deputy for the Third Estate to the States-General!”

“We are all crazy on account of the honour to the country—we think of nothing else. Michel, run and tell Margaret!”

I got up. I was afraid to see Margaret. I was afraid of crying before her, of betraying that I loved her, and of making her feel timid. Even in the passage I stopped a moment to summon up courage, and then I entered.

She was ironing in the little room.

"Why it is Michel!" said she, surprised to see me in my shirt-sleeves, for I had forgotten to put on my jacket and wash my hands.

I replied—

"Yes, it is I; I bring you good news."

"What is it?"

"Your father is named deputy to the States-General."

While I was speaking she became very pale, and I cried—

"Margaret, what is the matter?"

But she could not answer; joy and pride were the cause; and then, suddenly bursting into tears, she threw herself into my arms, saying—

"Oh! Michel, what an honour for my father!"

I held her tight; her arms were round my neck; I felt her sobs; her tears rolled down her cheeks! How I loved, how I should have liked to keep her! In my soul I said, 'Let any one try to take her from me! and yet I must let her go.' Her father's will was law. Long did Margaret cry; then letting go her hold on me, she ran and wiped her face on the towel, laughed, and said—

"How silly I am, Michel! How can one cry about such things?"

I said nothing. I looked at her with a love which cannot be described. She paid no attention to it!

"Now," said she, taking my arm, "come!"

And we walked off.

The great room of the Three Pigeons was full of people. I do not care to describe to you the embracings of Maître Jean, Dame Catherine, and Nicole; nor the compliments of the notables, Letumier, old Rigaud, and

Huré. That day the inn was not empty till nine in the evening : men, women, and children coming and going, waving their hats, their caps, falling about, and shouting loud enough to be heard at little Saint-Jean; glasses, bottles, and pipkins tinkled, Maître Jean's loud voice was to be heard above the tumult, with shouts of laughter which seemed never-ending; it was an indescribable *fête*. Seeing all this, I said to myself—

“What a wretch you are! The village is rejoicing in honour of Chauvel and Margaret, everybody is delighted, and there you are as sad as death—it is shameful.”

Valentine alone was of my way of thinking.

“It is the end of all; the rabble goes to court now; the seigneurs are mixed up with ragamuffins; there is no respect for anything; Calvinists are named instead of Christians; the end of the world is coming.”

And in my great sorrow I thought he was right; my courage was disappearing. I could not remain there in the crowd; Margaret herself was forced back into the kitchen, where the notables went to congratulate her. I took my cap and walked off. I went God knows where! straight before me, by the side of the road, I believe, across the fields.

It was as fine as it had been for a fortnight; the oats began to grow green, the wheat to shoot, along the hedges the linnets chirped, and in the air the larks hovered and sang their everlasting songs; the sun and moon rose and shone in spite of me; my misery was dreadful. I sat down three or four times under the shade of a hedge, with my head in my hands; and I dreamed! but the more I dreamed the sadder I became. I saw nothing either in the past nor in the future, as

they say of wretches lost at sea, who can see nothing but water and sky, and who cry—

“Now it is all over—now we must die!”

This is what my thoughts were. All else was nothing to me.

At last, at night I returned to the village, I knew not how, and I reached the back of our cottage. At a distance, at the other end of the street, I could still hear their cries and songs. I listened, and said to myself—

“Cry and sing; you are right; life is a trouble! and I went in; my father and mother were sitting on their stools spinning and plaiting. I wished them good evening; my father looked at me, and said—

“How pale you are, Michel; you are ill, my boy!”

I did not know what answer to make, when my mother smiled, and said—

“Why, don’t you see he has been drinking with the others? He has had as much as he could carry in honour of Chauvel!”

I answered in the bitterness of my soul—

“Yes, you are right, mother, I am ill. I have had too much—you are right; we must take advantage of an opportunity.”

My father said gently—

“Well, my child, go to bed; that will go off; good night, Michel.”

I climbed the ladder with the little tin lamp, quite worn out; I was obliged to rest my hand on my knee to help myself up. When there I set down the lamp on the floor, and I looked at my little brother Etienne, who was sleeping so soundly, his fair head thrown back on the coarse linen pillow, his small mouth open, and

his long hair round his neck ; I looked at him, thinking, "How like he is to my father, how very like !" And I kissed him, crying to myself, and saying, "Now I shall work for you, since everything is going, and nothing remains for me, it is for you that I will labour, and perhaps you will be happier than I. She whom you may love perhaps will not go away, and we shall live all together."

Then I undressed myself and lay down by him ; and all night long I did nothing but dream of my misfortune ; repeating to myself that no one ought to know of my love for Margaret, that it would be disgraceful ; that a man ought to be a man, and so on. And next day early I went to the forge, determined to be firm. That did me good.

That day the compliments continued ; and it was not only the Baraquins, but the town notables, MM. the mayor's officers ; MM. the *échevins*, assessors, syndics ; MM. the secretaries, registrars, treasurers, receivers, and comptrollers ; MM. the notaries and hammer-keepers of the freedom of the waters and forests, and how many ? More than I can tell.

All this crowd of people, whom no one knew, came one after the other with their cocked hats, their great powdered wigs, their long ivory-topped canes, their ratteen coats, silk stockings, shirt-frills and lace. They came like swallows round a church-tower in autumn ; they came to compliment Madlle. Margaret Chauvel, the daughter of our deputy from the bailiwick to the States-General. They seemed as pleased as if our elections had anything to do with them. What an abomination ! The whole room smelt of musk and vanille. I have often thought since that they were

true cuckoos, which occupy the nest when it is completed, but which never brought a single straw to help to build it. Their chief business is to profit by everything without trouble, and to obtain good places by bowing and scraping.

Before the elections they would have wished us neither good night nor good morning; but now they came to offer their services to us, thinking that Chauvel at Versailles could return it to them twice and thrice over. The wretches! only seeing them made me feel ill-will towards them.

Valentine and I could see from the forge opposite, while Maître Jean, Margaret, and Dame Catherine were receiving all these fine people. We could see all their grimaces through the open windows; and Valentine, yellow with indignation, said to me—

“Look at Syndic this, or M. Hammer-keeper that, making his bow; that is the proper way to bow. Now he is taking his pinch of rappee on his thumb; he knocks the tobacco from his shirt-frill with the end of his finger-nails; he learned that at Mgr. the Cardinal’s, but that does very well too at an innkeeper’s; that flatters the daughter of M. the Deputy Chauvel; now he turns on his heel and bows to the rest of the company.”

Valentine laughed; but I hammered away without looking, choking with rage. I then perceived still more clearly the distance there was between Margaret and myself. The Baraquins might have erred in respect to the importance of a deputy of the Third Estate to the States-General; but these others ought to know something about it; they would not make their bows and pay their compliments for nothing. Margaret had only

to choose—in fact, I felt she would be wrong to take a journeyman smith instead of the son of a counsellor or a syndic. That seemed to me a matter of course, and grieved me all the more.

Well, this scene was repeated up to five o'clock.

Margaret was to leave at night with the Paris courier. Maître Jean lent her a trunk; it was a large one, covered with cowskin, which he had inherited from his father-in-law, Didier-Ramel; it had been in the loft for thirty years, and I had the job of strengthening the corners with sheet-iron. Twenty times that day did the idea of smashing it to pieces with my hammer come into my head; but thinking I was working for Margaret, and that, doubtless, for the last time, filled my eyes with tears, and I continued to work with a zeal which one no longer feels after twenty. It would not be finished; I had always something to file or a hinge to fit; however, some minutes before five there was nothing more to be done; the lock acted well; the claw of the padlock fitted perfectly; everything was strong.

Margaret had just left. I saw her go into their house. I told Valentine I was tired, and should feel obliged if he would carry the trunk to Chauvel's. He took it on his shoulder, and went off with it at once. Quite done up, I had not courage to go there, or to find myself again alone with Margaret. I felt that my wretchedness would betray itself, so I put on my jacket and went into the inn. Every one else was gone, thank God! Maître Jean, with his cheeks red and his eyes bright, was singing the glories of the Three Pigeons. He declared that no other inn had ever received such an honour, and Dame Catherine was of the same opinion.

Nicole was laying the cloth.

Maître Jean, seeing me, said that Margaret had had her supper and was in a hurry to get her baggage together and to choose those of her father's books which she had to take with her. He asked about the trunk; I told him it was finished, and that Valentine had taken it to Chauvel's house.

At that moment Valentine came in; we sat down, and we had our supper.

I intended going home before eight o'clock, without taking leave of any one. What was the use of paying compliments, since it was all over, and I had nothing to hope for? I thought, "When she is gone Maître Jean will write to Father Chauvel that I was ill, if he troubles himself at all about it; if he does not, so much the better."

That was my idea; as soon as supper was over, I quietly got up and went out. It was dark; there was a light in the upper room in Chauvel's house. I stopped a minute to look at it; and then seeing Margaret come to the window, I ran away, but just as I turned the corner of their orchard I heard her cry out, "Michel! Michel!"

And I stopped as if the chimney had fallen on my head.

"What do you want, Margaret?" said I, my heart beating as if it would burst my bosom.

"Come up," she answered; "I was going to look for you; I want to speak to you."

So I went upstairs very pale, and I found her in the upper room before an open wardrobe. She had just filled the trunk, and said to me—

"Well, you see I have made haste; the books are at

the bottom, the linen above them, and on the top of all my two dresses. There is nothing more to pack. I am looking——”

And as I made no reply, being so very much embarrassed, “Look here,” said she, “now I must show you over the house, for you will have to take care of it; come!”

She took me by the hand and we entered the little back room, above the kitchen; it was their fruit-room, but there was no fruit, only the shelves to lay it on.

“See,” said she, “here you must put the apples and pears of the orchard. We have not many, so much the more reason for taking care of them. Do you see?”

“Yes, Margaret,” said I, looking at her, much affected.

Then we went downstairs; she showed me the lower room, where her father slept, their little cellar, and the kitchen opening on the orchard; and then she recommended her rose-trees to my care, saying that was her chief anxiety, and that she should be very angry with me if I did not take care of them. I thought to myself, “They will be well looked after, but what is the use of that if you are going to leave us?” Nevertheless I felt a sort of hope gently revive, my eyes grew dim, and seeing myself alone talking to her, I said to myself—

“My God! is it possible it is all over?”

As we returned to the lower room Margaret pointed out her father’s books, arranged on the shelves between the two small windows; she said—

“While we are away you must often come and fetch books from here, Michel; you must teach yourself; without learning you can never be anything.”

She spoke, but I could not answer, being so touched

to see that she could think of instruction for me—the very thing I had so often considered as first of all. I said to myself—

“She must love me! Yes, she does love me! How happy we should have been!”

After putting the lamp on the table, she gave me the house-key, and told me to open it from time to time to preserve it from damp.

Just as we went out she said, “I hope it will be in a good state, Michel, when we come back.”

When I heard her talk of coming back, I cried—

“You are coming back, then, Margaret? You are not leaving for good?”

My voice trembled and my head swam.

“What do you mean, if we return?” said she, looking at me with astonishment; “why, what do you think we are going to do, you silly fellow! Do you believe we are going to make our fortunes there?”

She laughed.

“Come back? yes, and poorer than we went. We must come back and attend to our business as soon as the people’s rights are voted; we shall be back this year, or next year at the latest.”

“Ah!” said I, “I thought you were never coming back!”

And I not being able to contain myself any longer, I began to sob like a child. I was sitting on the trunk, my head between my hands, thanking God, and yet ashamed of having spoken out. Margaret said nothing. This lasted several minutes, for I could not check myself. All at once I felt her hand touch my shoulder. I stood up. She was pale, and her beautiful black eyes glistened.

"Work hard, Michel," said she softly, again pointing to her father's little bookcase; "my father will love you."

She took the lamp and went out. I put the trunk on my shoulder, as if it were a feather, and followed her into the passage. I wanted to speak, but the words would not come.

Once outside, I shut the door and put the key in my pocket. The moon was shining amidst the stars; I cried out, as I held my head up—

"What a fine night, Margaret! Thank God for giving you such a fine night for your journey."

I was happy; she seemed more serious, and said as we entered the inn—

"Don't forget anything that you have promised me!"

The courier ought to leave about ten. There was just time for us to get there. Every one kissed Margaret, except Maître Jean and I, who were going to accompany her to the town; and some moments after we set off, by a beautiful moonlight. Dame Catherine and Nicole stood at the door, calling out—

"A pleasant journey, Margaret; come back soon!"

She replied—

"Yes, and may we all meet again as well as we are now!"

I took up the trunk, and we walked along the road with the two rows of poplars which lead to the glacis. Margaret walked by my side; two or three times she said to me—

"Is not the trunk heavy, Michel?"

And I answered—

"No! it is nothing at all, Margaret."

We were obliged to hurry, and we walked faster; when we reached the foot of the glacis Maître Jean called out—

“We shall be there directly.”

Half-past nine struck; some minutes later we passed the Porte de France. At the end of the street, where Lutz now lives, the vehicle was to stop. We ran, and at about a quarter of the length of the street we could hear the noise of the carriage, which was crossing the Place d’Armes.

“We are just in time,” said Maître Jean.

As we turned the corner the light from the courier’s lantern fell on us from the Rue de l’Eglise; we went under the archway, where by the greatest chance we found the old Jew Schmoulé, who was going to Nancy. Just then the vehicle stopped. There were several empty places. Maître Jean kissed Margaret. I had put down the trunk, and did not stir.

“Come here,” said she, offering me her cheek to be kissed.

As I kissed her she whispered in my ear—

“Work, Michel—work!”

Schmoulé had already taken his place in one corner. Maître Jean, as he lifted Margaret into the carriage, said to him—

“Take care of her, Schmoulé. I trust her to you.”

“Be easy,” said the old Jew, “our deputy’s daughter shall be attended to. Trust me.”

I was glad to see Margaret with an old acquaintance. She leaned out of the window and gave me her hand. The conducteur went into the bureau to see if the places were paid for. He mounted his seat, and said—

“Go on.”

The horses started off, and we called out all together—

“Good-bye, Margaret! Good-bye, Michel! Good-bye, Maitre Jean!

The carriage rolled away before us; it passed under the Porte de France. We followed it, thinking. Once outside the works, we could only hear the horses' bells as they galloped along the Sarrebourg road.

Maître Jean said—

“By eight o'clock to-morrow they will be at Nancy. Chauvel will be there to meet Margaret, and in four or five days they will be at Versailles.”

I said nothing.

We returned to the village and went straight to our cottage, where I found every one asleep in the peace of the Lord. I scrambled up the ladder, and that night I had no bad dreams, as I had the preceding.

XVII.

AFTER Margaret left everything became quiet again for several days. Rain had set in, we worked hard, and in the evening I profited by some hours' leisure to make use of Chauvel's bookshelves. There were many very good books—Montesquieu, Voltaire, Buffon, Jean-Jacques Rousseau ; all these great writers, whose names I had heard ten years before, were there—the large volumes in a line on the floor, and the others above them on the shelves. How I opened my eyes when they fell on a page which coincided with my own ideas ! and what pleasure I felt when I opened the *Dictionnaire Encyclopédique* of MM. d'Alembert and Diderot for the first time, and understood the alphabetical arrangement, where, according to his wants or his occupation, every man can find whatever he looks for !

This seemed admirable to me. I immediately turned to the article "Forge," where the history of smiths is told from Tubal Cain in the Bible down to our day, the method of getting iron from the mine, of smelting, tempering, hammering, and working it, down to the smallest details. I was very much struck by it, and when I said something about it next day to Maître Jean, he was astonished also. He said we young people had great opportunities for learning, but that in his time such books either did not exist or were too dear.

Valentine also seemed to think a great deal more of me.

About the 9th or 10th of May we had a letter from Chauvel to tell us of their arrival at Versailles, saying they were lodging at a master bootmaker's, Rue Saint-François, for fifteen livres a month. The States-General were just opened. He had not time to write fully, and only put at the end of his letter—

“I trust Michel will not hesitate to take my books home with him. Let him use them and take care of them, for one should always respect one's friends, and they are the best.”

I wish I could find this letter—the first of them all—but God knows what became of it! Maître Jean had the bad habit of lending and showing his letters to everybody, so that three-fourths of them were lost.

What Chauvel said showed me that Margaret had repeated our conversation to her father, and that he approved of it. I was filled with joy, tenderness, and courage united; and from that time I took home every evening a volume of the *Encyclopædia*, which I read, article by article, at one or two in the morning. My mother was very cross about the oil which was consumed. I let her complain; and when we were alone my father would say—

“Learn, my boy; try to be a man; he who knows nothing is too wretched. He works all day for others. Never mind what your mother says.”

Nor did I mind her, as I knew very well she would be the first to profit by what I might learn.

About this time the curé Christopher and a quantity of Lutzelbourg people were ill. Draining the Steinbach marshes had disseminated fever over the

whole valley. Everywhere you saw poor creatures dragging their limbs about, with their teeth chattering.

Maître Jean and I went to see the curé every Sunday. This strong man was nothing but skin and bone. We thought he would never recover.

Fortunately they called in old Freydinger, of Dierneringen, who knew the true remedy for marsh fevers—parsley seed boiled in water. By this remedy he cured half the village, and the curé at last slowly recovered.

During the month of May I remember there was much talk of bands of brigands who were plundering Paris. All the Baraquins and the mountain people wanted to take their pitchforks and their scythes and go and meet these scoundrels, who were reported to spread themselves over the fields and burn the crops.

Soon after we heard that these brigands had been massacred at the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, at a paper-stainer's named Reveillon, and the fright calmed down again for a time. Later this panic became stronger than ever, and every one wanted a gun and ammunition to defend themselves. I was naturally more uneasy at these reports, for during two months we had no other news than that afforded by the gazettes.

At last, however, thanks to God! we had a second letter from Chauvel, which I have kept, having taken care to copy it myself, the original being sent all over the country, and not seen again. A bundle of newspapers, old and new, came at the same time.

That day the curé Christopher and his brother the tall Materne, who fought in 1814 against the allies with Hullin, came to see us.

The curé had lost the fever; he was nearly well. He

and his brother dined with us. I read the letter to them. Dame Catherine, Nicole, and two or three notables were present, and were very much surprised that Chauvel, so well known for his good sense and caution, should allow himself to write so freely.

Here is his letter. Every one will see what was going on in Paris, and what we had to expect if the nobles and bishops had remained our masters:—

“To Jean Leroux, master blacksmith at the Baraques-du-Bois-de-Chênes, near Phalsbourg.

“July 1, 1789.

“You ought to have had a letter from me dated May 6th, in which I informed you of our arrival at Versailles. I told you in it that we had found a convenient lodging for fifteen livres a month at Antoine Pichot’s, master bootmaker, Rue Saint-François, in the quarter of St. Louis in the old town. We are still in the same place, and if you have anything to write to us about, be particular to direct the letter fully.

“I should like to know what sort of harvest you expect this year. I hope Maître Jean and Michel will write to me about it. Here we have had storms and showers of rain, occasionally sunshine. A bad season is expected. What do you think? Margaret wants to have news of her orchard, and particularly of her flowers. Attend to this.

“We live in this town like strangers. Two of my fellow-deputies, the curé Jacques, of Maisoncelle, near Nemours, and Pierre Gerard, syndic of Vic, in the bailiwick of Toul, are in the same house as ourselves, they below and we above, with a balcony looking on the street. Margaret goes to market and cooks for us.

"All goes on well. In the evening, in the room of the curé Jacques, we arrange our plans. I take my pinch of snuff, Gerard smokes his pipe, and we always end by agreeing more or less.

"That is how we get on. Now let us turn to the affairs of the nation.

"It is my duty to keep you informed of what is doing; but since our arrival we have had so many things to cross us, so many vexations, so many accidents. The two first orders, and principally the nobility, have shown us such ill-will that I could not see where or how it would end. Ideas changed from one day to another—one day confident, the next despairing. We needed both patience and calmness to bring these people to reason. Three times were they on the point of going away, and it was only when they saw that we could do without them, and draw up a constitution alone, that at last they made up their minds to take their place in the assembly and unite their deliberations to ours.

"I have been, therefore, unable hitherto to give you any certain news, but to-day the game is won, and I will take up the recital in detail from the beginning. You will read this letter to the notables, for I am not here for myself but for every one, and I should be indeed wrong if I did not render those who sent me an account of their affairs. As I have taken daily notes of everything, I shall omit nothing. When we reached Versailles, the 30th of April, with three other deputies from our bailiwick, we stopped at the Hôtel des Souverains, which was crammed with people. I will not tell you what they made us pay for a bouillon or a cup of coffee. It would frighten you. All these

people, the servants and the hotel-keepers, are valets from father to son; they live by the nobility, who live on the people, without troubling themselves about them or their wants. A cup of broth which costs with us two liards here costs the value of a day's work of a Baraque working-man, and it is so much a matter of course that any one who grumbled would be considered a poor creature, and be looked at with contempt. It is fashionable to allow oneself to be robbed and cheated by people like these.

“ You can easily believe this did not suit me; when one has earned one's bread honestly and laboriously for thirty-five years, one knows the price of things, and I did not hesitate to send for the fat landlord and tell him what I thought of his bill. It was the first time he had ever been treated in such a manner. The rascal pretended to look down on me, but I returned it with interest. If I had not been a deputy of the Third Estate he would have turned me out; fortunately this position causes one to be respected. I was told by my fellow-deputy, Gerard, the next day, that I had scandalised the hotel servants, which made me laugh. The bow and the grimace of a lacquey cannot be worth the labour of an honest man.

“ I wished to tell you this story that you might see the sort of people we have to deal with.

“ However, the day after our arrival, after going all over the town, I took my lodgings and sent my effects there. It was a lucky discovery: the other two I have named to you followed me there directly. We are here together, and we live as cheaply as we can.

“ You should have seen Versailles on the 3rd of May—the day of presentation to the king; half Paris was

in the streets ; and the next, at the mass of the Saint-Esprit, it was still more wonderful : people were even on the tops of the houses.

“But before anything else, I must tell you about the presentation.

“The king and the court reside in the Château of Versailles, built on a sort of mount like that of Mittelbronn, between the town and the gardens ; in front of the château is a court on a gentle slope ; on both sides of the court, on the right and left, are large buildings where the ministers are lodged ; at the back is the palace.

“You see this at a league’s distance when you come by the Paris Avenue—four or five times as broad as our highways, and bordered by fine trees ; the court is closed in front by a railing extending about sixty fathoms. Behind the château are the gardens, filled with water-works, statues, and similar decorations ; how many thousands of men must have been worked to death in our fields, and paid poll-taxes, gabelles, &c., &c., to construct this palace ! After that, the nobles and the lacqueys live well ; luxury, they say, is necessary to keep trade going ; so to live luxuriously at Versailles it is necessary for three-fourths of France to be famishing for a hundred years !

“We knew of the presentation by notices stuck up everywhere, and little books which have a very great sale here ; the sellers stop you in the street to get you to buy them.

“Many of the Third Estate thought it was wrong that they should have notice of the presentation through public bills when the two first orders had direct notice of it. I did not think much about it, and I set off at twelve

o'clock with my two fellow-deputies for the Salle des Menus. It is in this Salle des Menus that the sittings of the States-General are held; it is built outside the château, in the grand Avenue de Paris, on the site of some old workshops belonging to the magazine of the Menus-Plaisirs of his majesty the king; what the 'grands and menus plaisirs' of the king are I do not know, but the hall is very fine; two others join on to it, and are arranged, one for the deliberations of the clergy, the other for that of the nobility.

"We left the Salle des Menus in procession, surrounded by the people, who cried, '*Vive le Tiers Etat*!' We saw that these good people knew that we were their representatives, especially the mass of Parisians, who had come over-night, and who were at the railing. The railing in front of the palace was guarded by the Swiss; they kept the crowd back, and allowed us to pass. We reached the court and then the palace, where we ascended a staircase—the steps covered with carpets and the ceilings studded with golden lilies: along the balustrades were placed stately lacqueys, covered with embroidery—there must have been ten on each side up to the top.

"Once on the first landing, we entered a hall, more beautiful, grander, and richer than one can describe; I thought it was the throne-room; it was the ante-room.

"At last, in about a quarter of an hour, a door in front of us was opened, and that door, Maître Jean, led us into the real reception-hall, magnificently arched over, with rich mouldings, and painted as I cannot describe. We were in some sort lost there, but the king's guards stood all round, sword in hand, and sud-

denly on the left, amidst the silence, we heard the cry of—

“ ‘The king—the king!’ ”

“It approached nearer and nearer, and the master of the ceremonies, entering first, repeated—

“ ‘Gentlemen, the king!’ ”

“You will say, Maître Jean, that this was only a scene ; so it was. But it must be confessed it was very well imagined to raise the pride of those who are called great, and to impress respect on those who are looked upon as little. The grand master of the ceremonies, M. le Marquis de Brezé, in court dress, by the side of us poor deputies of the Third Estate, in coats and breeches of black cloth, seemed a superior being, and by his air it was easy to see he thought so himself; he approached our eldest member, bowing, and nearly at the same time the king advanced and crossed the hall alone. A chair had been placed for him in the centre, but he remained standing, his hat under his arm, and the marquis having signed to our senior member to advance, he presented him, then another, and so on, by bailiwicks; they told him the name of the bailiwick, he repeated it, and the king said nothing.

“At the close, however, he told us he was glad to see us, the deputies of the Third Estate; he spoke slowly and well; he is a very fat man, with a round face, large nose, lips, and chin, and a retreating forehead. At last he went out, and we retired by another door. This is what is called a presentation.

“When I got home I took off my black coat and breeches, my shoes and buckles, and my hat. Father Gerard came, and then the curé; our day was lost, but Margaret had prepared a leg of mutton and garlic for

us, of which we ate half with a good appetite, and drank a jug of cider, while talking over our affairs. Gerard and many others complained of this presentation, saying it ought to have taken place all the orders together; they thought from that we might conclude beforehand that the court would try to separate the orders. Some threw the blame on the master of the ceremonies. I thought to myself, we shall see. If the court opposes voting man by man, we will take it as a warning.

“The next morning early all the bells began to ring, and in the street were heard cries of joy and reports without end. It was the day of the mass of Saint-Esprit, to invoke the blessing of the Lord on the States-General. The three orders were assembled in the church of Notre-Dame, where they sang the ‘Veni Creator.’ After this ceremony, which was very pleasing on account of the beauty of the voices and the goodness of the music, we went in procession to the church of Saint-Louis. We came first, then the noblesse, and then the clergy, preceding the Holy Sacrament. The street was hung with tapestry belonging to the crown, and the crowd cried, ‘Vive le Tiers Etat!’

“It is the first time the populace did not side with fine clothes, for we were like crows by the side of these peacocks, with their little turned-up hats and feathers, coats embroidered in gold all down the seams, their elbows in the air, and swords by their sides. The king and queen, surrounded by their court, closed the procession. A few cries of ‘Vive le roi! Vive le duc d’Orleans!’ were heard. The bells rang incessantly; these people had some sense; not one among so many thousands was silly enough to cry ‘Vive la Reine! Vive

le Comte d'Artois ! Vive les Evêques !' Yet they were very fine notwithstanding.

"At the church of Saint-Louis the mass began. Then the Bishop of Nancy, M. de la Fare, preached a long sermon against the luxury of the court, such as all bishops have preached for ages, without retrenching a single ornament from their suites, their copes, or their canopies.

"This ceremony lasted till four in the afternoon ; every one thought it enough, and that we should have the satisfaction of discussing our affairs together, but we were not near it yet, for the next day, May 5, the opening of the States-General was another ceremony. These people can exist only on ceremony, or, to speak plainly, on comedy.

"The next day, then, all the States-General met in our hall, which is called the Hall of the Three Orders. It is lighted from above, by a round opening hung with white satin, and these in columns on both sides. At the end there was a throne under a canopy, splendidly besprinkled with golden lilies.

"The Marquis de Brezé and his masters of the ceremonies conducted the deputies to their places. Their work began at nine and finished at half-past twelve ; you were called by name, led to your place, and begged to be seated. At the same time the state counsellors, the ministers and state secretaries, the governors and lieutenants-general of provinces, took their places. A long table covered with green cloth below the estrade was destined to the secretaries of state ; at one end of it Necker was seated, at the other M. de Saint-Priest. If I had to give you all the details I should never have done.

“The clergy were seated on the right of the throne, the nobility on the left, and we in the front. The representatives of the clergy were 291, of the nobility 270, and we 578; some of ours were still absent, as the Paris elections did not terminate till the 19th, but that was not perceptible. At last, about one o’clock, they gave notice to the king and queen, who appeared almost immediately, preceded and followed by the princes and princesses of the royal family and their court attendants. The king took his seat on the throne, the queen by his side in a large arm-chair, without the canopy; the royal family round the throne; the princes, ministers, and peers of the kingdom rather lower down, and the rest of the *cortège* on the steps of the estrade. The ladies of the court, in full dress, filled the galleries of the hall on the side of the estrade, and mere spectators were distributed in the other galleries between the pillars.

“The king wore a round hat, the loop of which was set with pearls and mounted by a large diamond, known by the name of Pitt. Each one was seated in an arm-chair, a chair, a bench, or a stool, according to his rank and dignity; for these things are of the greatest importance; on that does the greatness of a nation depend! I could never have believed it if I had not seen it: everything is settled beforehand for these ceremonies. Would to God our affairs were as well ordered! But questions of etiquette take precedence, and it is only after the lapse of ages that one has time to trouble oneself about the distresses of the people.

“I wish that Valentine had been three or four hours in my place; he could explain to you the difference between one cap and another, and between one robe and

another! What interested me most was when the grand master of the ceremonies made us a sign to be attentive, and the king began to read his speech. All I can recollect of it is that he was glad to see us; that he hoped we should come to a good understanding, to prevent innovations and find money for the deficit; that in this hope he had called us together, that the debt would be laid before us, and that he felt confident beforehand that we should find means to reduce it, and so to strengthen public credit; that this was his most ardent desire, and that he loved his subjects.

“Then he sat down, saying his chancellor would still further explain his intentions. The whole hall cried, ‘Vive le Roi!’

“The chancellor, M. de Barentin, having risen, told us that his majesty’s first desire was to spread benefits around him, and that the virtues of sovereigns are the first resource of nations in difficult times; that our sovereign, then, was determined to crown public happiness, that he had summoned us to help him, and that the third race of our kings had a right above all to the confidence of every good Frenchman, that it strengthened the order of succession to the crown, and that it had abolished all degrading distinctions ‘between the proud successors of conquerors and the humble posterity of the conquered!’ But that, nevertheless, it inclined to the nobility, for the love of order had raised the distinctions of rank between these and those; and in a monarchy they should be maintained; lastly, that it was the king’s will to see us meet the following day to verify our powers, and to occupy ourselves with the important matters which he had pointed out to us—namely, money! Then M. the Chancellor

sat down, and M. Necker read us a long speech about the debt, which amounted to sixteen hundred millions, and produced an annual deficit of 56,150,000 livres. He prepared us to pay this deficit, but he said not a word of the constitution which our electors have charged us to establish.

“ The same evening, as we went home very much surprised, we heard that two new regiments, Royal Cravate and Bourgogne Cavalry, with a battalion of Swiss, had just arrived in Paris, and that several other regiments were on their march. This news gave us material for reflection, the more so as the queen, Mgr. the Comte d’Artois, M. the Prince de Condé, M. the Duke de Polignac, M. the Duke d’Enghien, and M. the Prince de Conti had disapproved of the convocation of the States-General, and they doubted seeing us pay the debt if we were not helped a little. On the part of any others but princes this would be called a trap! But deeds change their name according to the rank of those who commit them. On the part of the princes, then, it was simply a *coup d’état* which they were preparing. Happily I had already seen the Parisians, and I thought those brave people would not desert us. Well, that evening my two fellow-deputies and myself agreed, after supper, that we must trust to ourselves rather than to any one else, and that the arrival of these regiments augured no good for the Third Estate.

“ It was on the 6th of May that affairs began to show some decided character; before that sitting, all the ceremonies I have described to you and all the speeches which had been made to us had led to nothing; but now you will really see something new.

“The next morning at nine, Gerard, M. the curé Jacques, and myself arrived at the hall of the States-General. They had removed the hangings of the canopy and the carpet of the throne. The hall was nearly empty, but the deputies of the Third Estate arrived, the benches began to fill; we talked to one another and made acquaintance with our neighbours, as people ought to do who have undertaken such serious matters. Twenty minutes after nearly all the deputies of the Third Estate were assembled. We waited for those of the nobility and the clergy; not one showed himself.

“Suddenly one of our deputies came and told us that the two other orders had met each in its own hall, and were then in deliberation. Naturally, this produced as much surprise as indignation. We then decided to name as president of the Third Estate our senior in age, an old bald-headed man, whose name was Leroux, like yours, Maître Jean. He accepted the nomination, and chose six other members of the Assembly to assist him.

“Some time was necessary to re-establish silence, for thousands of ideas occurred to you at that moment: each had to say what he foresaw, what he feared, and what means he thought it best to employ in so serious a situation. At last we became calm, and M. Malouet, a former *employé* in the administration of the marine, as I was told, proposed to send a deputation to the two privileged orders to invite them to join us in the place of the general assemblies. A young deputy, M. Monnier, answered him that such a step would compromise the dignity of the commons; that there was no hurry, and we should soon be informed what the privileged orders

had decided, and that we could then act accordingly. I was of his opinion. Our president added that we could not as yet consider ourselves as members of the States-General, since these estates were as yet not constituted, nor our powers verified; and for this reason he declined to open the letters addressed to the Assembly; which was taking a sensible view of the matter. Much was also said on the same day on the subject, which all came to the same thing.

“Towards half-past two a deputy from Dauphiné brought us the news that the two other orders had decided on verifying their powers separately. The sitting was then raised in confusion, and adjourned to the next day at nine.

“It was quite palpable. We saw that the king, the queen, the nobles, and the bishops found us sufficiently qualified to pay their debts, but they did not care to give us a constitution where the people would have a voice in the chapter. They preferred incurring debts alone, without protest or control, than to assemble us once in two hundred years, to induce us to accept these debts in the people’s name, and to consent to be taxed to all eternity

“Imagine what our reflections were and our anger after this discovery.

“We sat till midnight, crying out and irritating ourselves at the abominable selfishness and injustice of the court. After that, I said to my comrades, it were better for us to remain calm in public, to keep right on our side if it were possible, and to leave the people to reflect. We decided on so doing; and the next day, when we reached the hall, we saw that the other deputies had doubtless taken the same resolution; for instead

of the confusion of the previous evening, all was serious, the president in his place, and his assistants writing at the estrade, receiving letters and laying them on the table.

“The discussions of the nobility and clergy, in the form of pamphlets, were sent to us, and I add them here, to show what these people thought and desired. The clergy had carried the verification of their powers in their order by a majority of 133 votes against 114, and the nobility also by 88 votes against 47, in opposition to the good feeling and good sense of their party—the Viscount Castellane, the Duke de Liancourt, the Marquis de Lafayette, the deputies from Dauphiné, and those of the seneschalship of Aix and Provence, who combated their injustice—they had already appointed twelve commissions to verify their own powers.

“On that day Malouet renewed his proposal to send a deputation to the two privileged orders to induce them to join the commons’ deputies; and thereupon the Count de Mirabeau rose. Although noble, he is a deputy of the Third Estate, the nobility of his own province having refused to admit him among them, as not being a proprietor by tenure. He immediately made himself a trader, and the town of Aix elected him; he is a Provençal, tall and stout, with a high forehead, large eyes, yellow complexion, plain, and marked by the small-pox; he has a harsh voice, and stammers when he begins; but when he is once excited, there is a great change, and everything becomes clear; you seem to see what he says, you fancy you have always thought as he does; and from time to time his harsh voice lowers its tone, when he is about to say something great or forcible; it mutters at first, and then goes off like a clap of thunder. I can give

you no idea how the face of such a man changes; voice, eyes, gesture, ideas, all are in accordance. You forget self while listening to him; he holds you, and you cannot release yourself. If you look at those around you, you find them all pale. So long as he is on our side all will be well; but we must be on our guard. For myself I distrust him. First, he is noble; and then he is a man without money, of violent passions, and in debt. Only to look at his great fleshy nose, enormous jaws, and his stomach, covered with ragged but still magnificent lace, you think he could devour Alsace and Lorraine, together with Franche-Comté and the country round besides! All the same, I devoutly thank the nobles for having refused to enter his name on their register; we had at first too great want of him, as you will see further on.

“On that day Mirabeau did not say much; he only observed that we must be constituted an order ourselves before we could send a deputation, that we were not yet so constituted, and that we would not constitute ourselves without the others. It would be better, then, to wait.

“The advocate Monnier then said that we ought to allow those deputies of the Third Estate who were willing to undertake it to go as individuals, and without any mission, to try and induce the nobles and the clergy to co-operate with us according to the king’s desire. As it could compromise nothing, this opinion was adopted. Twelve members went out to gain information; they announced that in the hall of the nobles they only found the commissions occupied in verifying those gentlemen’s powers; and in that of the clergy, the order being sitting, their president replied that

they would discuss their proposal. An hour after, MM. the bishops of Montpellier and Orange, with four other ecclesiastics, entered our hall and told us that their order had decided to name commissioners who should join ours and those of the nobility, to see if the powers could be verified in common.

“This reply caused us to adjourn our sitting of the 7th of May to the 12th, and I took advantage of these four days’ holiday to visit Paris with my two comrades and Margaret. We had no time to stop there in passing on the 10th of April, two days after the sack of Reveillon’s house in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine. The excitement was then great, the prévôt’s guards were on the alert, the arrival of a crowd of bandits was spoken of. I was curious to see what was going on there, if they were quiet again, and what they thought of our first sittings. Parisians who were coming backwards and forwards had given me some idea, but I preferred seeing for myself. We set off early in the morning, and our vehicle in three hours reached this immense city, of which one can form no adequate idea, not only on account of the height of the houses, and of the quantity of streets and lanes crossing one another, the antiquity of the buildings, the number of squares, blind alleys, cafés, shops, and stalls of all descriptions, which join on to and follow one another as far as one’s eye can reach, and the signs hanging from story to story, up to the roof; but more so still because of the numberless cries of sellers of fried fish, fruiterers, old clothesmen, and thousands of other people, drawing carts, carrying water, vegetables, and other goods. One might think oneself in a menagerie, where the hitherto unknown birds of the American forests utter their different cries.

And then the rolling of the carts and carriages, the horrid smells from heaps of refuse, the people's pitiful looks, all dressed in old clothes of the latest fashion, dancing, singing, and laughing, full of politeness to strangers, and of good sense and gaiety in their distress; who see everything favourably, provided they can walk about, give utterance to their opinions in the caf  s, and read the paper! All that, Ma  tre Jean, makes this city resemble nothing else in this world, certainly nothing at home. Nancy is a palace compared to Paris, but a palace empty and dead—here everything is alive.

“The unhappy Parisians still feel the effects of last winter's dearth; many of them are really nothing but skin and bone; nevertheless, they are merry; one sees jokes stuck up in the windows. When I saw that I was delighted; I found myself at home. Instead of dragging my bale from village to village for hours together, I should have found buyers here, so to say, at every step. Then, again, this is the true country for patriots; these people, poor and wretched as they are, cling to their rights above all: the rest will follow.

“Our comrade Jacques has one of his sisters, a fruiterer, Rue du Bouloi, near the Palais-Royal; we got down there. All along the street, after entering the faubourg, we heard nothing but this song:—

“ ‘ Long live the Third Estate of France,
’Twill soon receive preponderance
O'er royalty and prelacy—
Ahi! the poor nobility!
Far in advance of priest and judge,
With knowledge armed, the poorer drudge
Doth prove the better man is he—
Ahi! the poor nobility!’

“ If they had known we belonged to the Third Estate they were capable of carrying us in triumph. It would be indeed the act of cowards to forsake such people as these! And I can tell you, if we were not already decided, the mere sight of this courage, gaiety, and virtues in such distress would have made us feel and swear to fulfil our mission, and recover our rights or die.

“ We spent four days with the widow Lefranc; Margaret, with the curé Jacques, has seen all Paris—the Jardin des Plantes, Notre-Dame, the Palais-Royal, and even the theatres. My only pleasure was walking about the streets and squares, going here and there, and along the Seine, where old books are sold; on the bridges, peopled by old clothesmen and dealers in fried fish; talking before the shops with any one; stopping to listen to the song of a blind man, or seeing a play acted in the open air; performing dogs were not wanting, nor dentists with a pipe and a big drum; but the play at the end of the Pont-Neuf is the best; they always have the laugh against princes and nobles; they are always made to talk nonsense; two or three times I have been so pleased that tears came in my eyes.

“ I have visited the corporation of Paris, where they were still discussing their memorials. They have come to a wise determination: they have appointed a permanent commission to watch their deputies, to advise and even to caution them if they do not fulfil their mission in a satisfactory manner. This is a good idea, Maître Jean, and which has unfortunately been omitted in other places. What is a deputy if he is overlooked by no one, who might sell his vote with impunity, and set those who sent him at defiance?—for he is become rich and

the others remain poor ; he is protected by the power which buys him, and his constituents remain in the right, it is true, but without appeal and without remedy ! The part the corporation of Paris has taken ought to be to our advantage ; it is one of the articles which ought to head the constitution : that electors should have it in their power to deprive of his seat, proceed against, and cause to be punished, every deputy who is false to his mission, as he who makes a bad use of a power of attorney is punished. Till then we shall but be thankful for small mercies. Well, this decision gave me pleasure ; now I continue.

“ In addition to my joy at seeing this great movement, I had also the satisfaction of observing that people here well know what they want and what they are about. I went in the evening, after supper, to the Palais-Royal, which the Duke of Orleans has thrown open to every one. This duke is a profligate, but at least no hypocrite. After passing the night in a tavern or elsewhere, he does not go to mass and receive absolution, to begin again the next day. They say he is a friend of Sièyes and Mirabeau ; he is reproached with having brought a number of scoundrels into Paris to plunder and sack the city : this is not easy to believe, because after so frightful a winter they would have come of themselves to look for food. There is no need of giving locusts a hint to make them fall on the crops.

“ The queen and court hate the duke, which makes him many friends ; his Palais-Royal is always open ; in the interior there are rows of trees, where every one can walk about ; four rows of arcades surround the garden, and beneath are the finest shops and most elegant taverns in Paris,

"It is there young men and newspaper writers meet, and make their views known in the most open manner, without scruple. As to what they say, it is not always very brilliant, and generally it goes out of your head as through a sieve; the good which remains is of no great quantity—more straw than wheat. I have listened to them once or twice, and on going away I have been at some pains to remember what they had been talking about—all the same the foundation is good, and some of them show plenty of spirit.

"We had under the trees a bottle of bad and dear wine. Rents are also very high: I have been told the smallest of these shops lets for two and three thousand livres a year—customers must pay for this. This Palais-Royal is in reality a large fair, and at night, when the lamps are lighted, it is really very fine.

"On the 11th, about half-past two in the afternoon, we set off well pleased with our journey, and sure that the bulk of the Parisians are in our favour, which is the principal thing. On the 12th, at nine, we were at our posts, and as our commissioners had not been able to come to any arrangement with those of the nobility and the clergy, we saw that they were only desirous of making us lose our time. For that reason, at this sitting we took measures for proceeding to business. The president and his assistants were ordered to make a list of the deputies, and it was decided that every day a commission consisting of a deputy from every province should be appointed to keep order in the conferences, collect and count the votes, take the majority of opinions on each question, &c.

"The next day we received a deputation from the nobles, to signify to us that their order was constituted,

that they had named their president and secretaries, opened registers, and taken divers measures, among others to proceed alone to verify their powers. They had quite decided to do without us. The same day the clergy sent us word that they had appointed commissioners to confer with those of the nobles and the Third Estate on the verification of powers in common, and the union of the three orders.

“A great discussion arose; some were for appointing commissioners, others proposed we should only acknowledge as legal representatives those whose powers had been examined in the General Assembly, and that we should invite the deputies of the Church and of the nobility to meet us in the hall of the States-General, where we had been awaiting them for a week.

“As the discussion grew warm, and several deputies wished to speak, the debate was continued the following day. Rabaud de Saint-Etienne, a Protestant minister; Viguier, deputy from Toulouse; Thouret, advocate to the Parliament at Rouen; Barnave, deputy from Dauphiné; Boissy d’Anglas, from Languedoc, all men of great talent and admirable speakers, above all, Barnave, insisted, some that we should go on, others that we should wait and give the nobility and clergy time to reflect, as if all their reflections had not been already made. At last Rabaud de Saint-Etienne prevailed, and sixteen members were chosen to confer with the commissioners of the clergy and the nobles.

“In our sitting of the 23rd a committee of report was chosen, charged with drawing up the minutes of all that had passed since the opening of the States-General. This proposal was rejected, because this plain exposure might increase the agitation of the country,

by showing it the intrigues of the nobility and clergy to paralyse the Third Estate.

"The 22nd and 23rd there was a report that his majesty would submit to us the project of a loan. By means of this loan they could do without us, since the deficit would thus be provided for, but our children and descendants would have to pay the interest for ever. Troops arrived the same days in large bodies round Paris and Versailles.

"The 26th they finished drawing up rules for the maintenance of good order and discipline, and our commissioners came to tell us that they had been unable to agree with those of the nobles.

"The next day, the 27th, Mirabeau summed up all that had been done till then in these words:—'The nobility will not join us to verify our powers in common. We desire to verify the powers in common. The clergy persists in seeking to conciliate us. I propose to appoint a very numerous and very solemn deputation to the clergy, to adjure them, in the name of the God of Peace, to side with reason, justice, and truth, and to join their fellow-deputies in their common hall.' All this took place in public, the crowd surrounded us, and did not hesitate to applaud those of whom it approved.

"The next day, 28th, a barrier was erected to separate the Assembly from the public, and a deputation was sent to the clergy in the terms indicated by Mirabeau.

"This same day we received a letter from the king. 'His majesty had been informed that difficulties respecting the verification of powers existed still between the three orders. He saw, with pain and uneasiness, the Assembly, which he had summoned to devote itself to

the regeneration of the country, abandon itself to a fatal state of inaction. Under these circumstances he requested the commissioners named by these orders to recommence their conferences, in the presence of the chancellor and of commissioners appointed by his majesty, that he might be especially made aware what overtures had been made for a reconciliation, and be able to contribute directly to so desirable a state of concord.'

"It seems, that we, the commons' representatives were the cause of the States-General's inactivity for three weeks; it was we who wished to form a separate party, and who were defending ancient privileges against the rights of the nation!

"His majesty took us for children. Several deputies spoke against this letter, among others Cannes. They said that renewed conferences were useless, that the nobility would not listen to reason; that, besides, the commons could not submit to the jurisdiction of the chancellor, who would naturally side with the nobles; that our commissioners would be there, in the presence of those of the king, as pleaders before judges decided beforehand to condemn them; and that what had happened in 1589 would happen now. Then the king had also proposed to pacify men's minds, and he had done so effectually by an edict in council.

"Many deputies were of the same opinion; they considered the letter as a snare. Nevertheless, the next day, the 29th, 'in order to exhaust all means of conciliation,' we sent a very humble address to the king, thanking him for his kindness and goodness, and telling him that the commissioners of the Third Estate were ready to resume their sittings with those of the clergy

and nobility. But on the Monday following, June 1st, Rabaud de Saint-Etienne, one of our commissioners, having come to tell us that the minister Necker proposed to them to accept the verification of powers by orders, and to submit themselves in all cases of doubt to the decision of the council, we confessed that Cannes was right. The king himself was opposed to the verification in common; he wanted three separate chambers instead of one; he stood by the clergy and the nobility against the Third Estate! Henceforth we had only ourselves to depend upon.

“All I have related to you up to this point, Maitre Jean, is exact; and that will show you the uselessness of fine words, grand phrases, and flowers of oratory, as they are called. The poorest Baraquin, if endowed with sense, sees things distinctly, and all these additions of style are useless and injurious.

“Everything may be explained simply:—You want this—I will have that—you surround us with soldiers—the Parisians are with us—you have powder, guns, Swiss mercenaries, and we have nothing but our commission, but we are tired of being robbed, ground down, and stripped; you believe yourselves the stronger; we shall see!

“That is the foundation of the story; all inventions of words and speeches, when right and justice are evident, are superfluous. We have been ridiculed; let us go to facts:—We pay, we will know what becomes of our money; moreover, we will only pay as little as possible; our children are soldiers, we will know who commands them, why they command them, and how we profit by it; you have orders of nobility, and the third order; why these distinctions? in what respect are the

children of the one superior to the children of the other? are they of a different species? do they descend from the gods, while ours spring from animals? There, that is what must be made clear.

“Now let us continue.

“The nobility reckoned on the troops; it expected to carry all before it by means of the troops, and rejected our proposals. Being in sitting the 10th of June, after the report of the conferences of our commissioners with those of the nobles had been read, Mirabeau said the deputies of the commons could wait no longer; we had duties to fulfil, and it was time to begin, that a member of the Paris deputation had a motion of the highest importance to bring forward, and he invited the Assembly to give him a patient hearing.

“This member was the Abbé Sièyes, a man from the south, forty or forty-five years of age; he speaks badly, with a weak voice, but his ideas are good. I have sold many of his pamphlets, as you know; they have done much good. This is what he said, amidst deep silence—

““Since the opening of the States-General the commons’ deputies have followed an open and calm line of conduct; they have observed all respect compatible with their character for the nobility and the clergy, which the two privileged orders have repaid by hypocrisy and subterfuge. The Assembly can remain no longer inactive without betraying its duties and the interests of its constituents; it must, then, verify the powers. The nobility refuses to do so; when one order declines to advance, can it then condemn the others to inaction? No! The Assembly, then, has nothing else left but for a last time to request the attendance of the

privileged orders in the hall of the States-General, to assist at, contribute to, and submit to the verification of powers in common; and then, in case of refusal, to take no notice of them.'

"Mirabeau then said we must take the nobility and clergy in default.

"A second sitting took place the same day from five to eight o'clock; the motion of the Abbé Sièyes was adopted, and it was at the same time decided to read an address to the king to explain the motives of the commons' resolution.

"On Friday, June 12th, it was necessary to signify to the two other orders what had been resolved, and to draw up the address to the king. M. Malouet proposed a draught of an address, written in a manly and vigorous style, but filled with compliments. Volney, who is said to have travelled over Egypt and the Holy Land, answered him—'Let us distrust all praises dictated by flattery and baseness, and engendered by interest. We are here in the abode of plots and intrigues; the air we breathe carries corruption to our hearts! Some representatives of the nation appear, alas! to be already seriously infected by it.' He continued in this strain, and Malouet said nothing in reply.

"Finally, after a great struggle, it was decided that the address to the king drawn up by M. Barnave, containing an account of all that had taken place since the opening of the States-General and the resolutions of the Third Estate, should be presented by a deputation. Our deputation returned without having seen the king, who was hunting, when another deputation from the nobles came to tell us that their order was deliberating on our propositions. M. Bailly, deputy for Paris, replied—

“ ‘Gentlemen, the commons have waited a long time for you gentlemen of the nobility.’

“And without allowing any delay to be occasioned by this fresh ceremony, which, like all the others, had but the object in view of putting us off from day to day and from week to week, we began to call over the bailiwicks, after having appointed M. Bailly provisional president, and having desired him to name two members as secretaries to draw up a report of the call of the house which they were about to make, and of the other proceedings of the assembly.

“The call began at seven and finished at ten. Thus we were constituted, not as a Third Estate as the others wished, but as States-General. The two privileged orders were only private assemblies: we were the assembly of the nation.

“We had lost five weeks through the ill-will of the nobles and the bishops, and you will now see what they still did to impede our proceedings.

“I will not tell you about questions of words which were debated, and which occupied three entire sittings, to settle whether we should entitle ourselves representatives of the French people, according to Mirabeau, the lawful assembly of the representatives of the majority of the nation, acting in the absence of the minority, as Monnier suggested; or acknowledged and verified representatives of the French nation, as Sièyes required. I should have quietly adopted the old name of States-General. The nobles and bishops might refuse to appear—that regarded them alone. We were none the less the representatives of ninety-six hundredths of France,

“At length, according to a fresh suggestion of Sièyes, the title of ‘National Assembly’ was adopted.

“One very good result of our declaration of the 12th was that every day some good curés left the assembly of the bishops, and came and verified their powers before us. On the 13th three came from Poitou, the 14th six more, the 15th two, the 16th six, and so on. Imagine our joy, our enthusiastic shouts, our embracings! Our president took up half the sittings in paying compliments to these good curés with tears in his eyes. Among the first was the Abbé Gregoire, of Embermenil, to whom I have sold more than one of my little books. On seeing him arrive I ran to meet him, and while embracing him I whispered in his ear—

“‘Well and good! You follow Christ’s example, who frequented neither princes nor high priests, but the people.’

“He laughed. I fancied I saw the bishops’ looks in the hall close by. What a break up! After all, the curés would have been very foolish to stand by those who had been humiliating them for ages past. Is not the heart of the people the same under the priest’s cassock as the peasant’s frock?

“On the 17th, in the presence of four or five thousand spectators, the Assembly declared itself constituted, and each of the members took this oath: ‘We swear and promise to fulfil the duties committed to us with zeal and fidelity.’ Bailly was confirmed president of the National Assembly, and it was unanimously decreed—‘The Assembly declares that it consents provisionally for the nation to the levying of existing taxes—though illegally established and levied—until the day

only of the separation of the Assembly, from whatsoever cause it may happen.'

"Think of that, Maître Jean, and make the notables of our country fully understand it. Our distress for so many years has arisen from the fact that we were dull and timid enough to pay taxes which had not been voted by our representatives. Money is the sinew of war, and we have always given our money to those who put the rope round our necks. Now, he who would pay taxes after the dissolution of the National Assembly would be a most miserable wretch; he would betray father, mother, wife, children, and himself and his country, and those who would levy them could not be regarded as Frenchmen but as banditti. This is the first principle laid down by the National Assembly of 1789.

"The sitting was broken up at five, and postponed to the same evening of June 17th.

"You may conceive how the king, the queen, the princes, the court, and the bishops opened their eyes when they heard this proclamation of the Third Estate. During the sitting M. Bailly had been requested to attend the chancery there to receive a letter from the king; the Assembly refused to consent to his absence. At the evening's sitting M. Bailly read us the letter from the king, who did not approve of the expression 'privileged orders' which several deputies of the Third Estate had used in designating the nobility and clergy. The words did not please him. It was contrary, said he, to the harmony which ought to exist among us; but the fact did not seem to him to be contrary to harmony—the fact should remain!

"There, Maître Jean, is what I told you before; injustice does not exist at court when it bears the name

of justice, nor meanness when it is called greatness? What reply can be made to that? All were silent.

“The next day we were present in a body at the procession of the Holy Sacrament in the streets of Versailles. On Friday, the 19th, committees were organised, and four were instituted, the first to watch over our support, the second for verifications, the third for correspondence and publishing, the fourth for the rules of the house. All was then advancing steadily, we were making great progress; but that was not what the court desired, especially as the same evening, towards six o'clock, we learned that one hundred and forty-nine deputies of the clergy had declared for the verification of powers in common.

“We had borne with everything in the fulfilment of our mission; we had been calm, we had been deaf to the indignation with which insolence and hypocrisy inspired us! As indirect means were insufficient to exasperate us and put us in the wrong, it was determined to have recourse to others more rude and humiliating. This began June 20th.

“On that day, early in the morning, we heard it proclaimed in the streets by heralds—

“‘The king having decreed to hold a royal sitting of the States-General on Monday, June 22nd, the preparations which were to be made in the three halls necessitated the suspension of the Assemblies until the said sitting, and his majesty would make known, by another proclamation, at what hour he would proceed on Monday to the States Assembly.’

“We heard at the same time that a detachment of the Gardes-Françaises had taken possession of the Salle des Menus.

“Every one then saw that the moment of danger was come. I was glad to see my fellow-deputies Gerard and the curé Jacques come into our room at seven. The day’s sitting was appointed for eight. While at breakfast we resolved to stand firm round the president who represented our union, and consequently our strength. To speak the truth, we looked upon those who tried to stop the advance of the country as true rogues—fellows who had only lived by the labour of others—creatures without experience, capacity, delicacy, or genius, and whose whole strength was derived from the people’s ignorance and stupidity, which are always caught by the finery of lacqueys, without reflecting that all this gold lace, these embroidered coats, and hats, and feathers, all these carriages and horses, are drawn from their own labour, by the impudence of these rascals who plunder them of their money.

“The measure of closing the doors of the Assembly was so clumsy that we shrugged our shoulders in contempt of it. Of course our good king knew nothing about these things, his calm and gentle mind took no cognisance of such trifles; we blessed him for his kindness and simplicity, without charging him with the folly and insolence of the court!

“At a quarter to eight we set off from our house. As we approached the Salle des Menus we saw about one hundred deputies standing together on the esplanade; our president, Bailly, was in the midst of them. I must give you a description of this brave man. Up to the present moment in a crowd of others he had not distinguished himself; we had chosen him for his reputation of learning and honesty. He is a man of fifty or fifty-five, with a long face and dignified air. He hurries

nothing on; he listens and considers for some time before adopting any course; but having once decided, he does not give way.

“Other deputies were now arriving by different alleys. As nine o'clock struck we drew near the hall, M. Bailly and two secretaries at our head. Some Gardes-Françaises were before the door. As soon as they saw us coming an officer in command appeared and came forward; M. Bailly had a lively discussion with him. I was not near enough to hear, but it at the same time was stated that the door was closed to us. The officer (the Count de Vertan) very politely justified himself by his orders. We were indignant. In the course of twenty minutes the Assembly was nearly complete; and as the officer on guard, notwithstanding his politeness, would not allow us to pass, several deputies made a vigorous protestation, and then we ascended the avenue nearly up to the railing, in the midst of great confusion. Some proposed to go to Marly and hold the Assembly under the windows of the château; others said the king sought to plunge the country into the horrors of a civil war, and starve it, and that nothing similar had been seen under the greatest despots, Louis XI., Richelieu, and Mazarin. Our indignation was shared by half Versailles; the people, men and women, surrounded and listened to us.

“M. Bailly had left us about ten; we did not know what had become of him, when three deputies came and informed us, that after having removed our documents from the hall by the help of the commissioners who accompanied him, he had betaken himself to a large hall where they usually played at tennis, in the Rue Saint-François, nearly opposite my lodgings, and that

this hall was large enough to hold the Assembly. We set off escorted by the people to the tennis-court, descending the street which runs along the back of that part of the château which is called 'les grands communs,' and we entered the old building about twelve o'clock. The affront we had just been subjected to was sufficient evidence that the nobility and the bishops were tired of temporising with us, and that we must expect further insults; and we should be under the necessity of taking measures, not only with a view to assure the fulfilment of our mission, but also to guarantee our own existence. These people, accustomed only to employ force, knew no other law; happily we were near Paris, which counteracted their plans.

"Let us get on.

"The hall of the tennis-court is a square building about thirty-five feet high, paved with large flags, with neither pillars, beams, nor cross-beams, and the roof of thick planking; light is admitted by windows very high up, which gives a sombre appearance to the interior. All round it there are narrow boarded galleries; we had to traverse them to reach this species of *halle aux blés*, or covered market, which must have been a long time in existence. Under any circumstances buildings were not erected in stone for a childish game. It was deficient in everything, chairs, tables, &c. They were obliged to fetch them from the neighbouring houses. The master of the establishment, a little bald man, seemed pleased with the honour that we did him. A table was set in the middle of the hall, and some chairs round it. The Assembly stood. The crowd filled the galleries.

"Then Bailly mounted a chair, and began by remind-

ing us of what had just occurred; he then read to us two letters from M. the Marquis de Brezé, master of the ceremonies, in which that nobleman communicated the order to him to suspend our meetings until the royal sitting. These two letters were written in the same terms: the second merely added that the order was positive. In conclusion, M. Bailly recommended us to deliberate on what plan we should adopt.

“I need not try, Maître Jean, to make you understand our emotion; when one is the representative of a great people, and one sees this people insulted in one’s own person—when one calls to mind what our fathers have suffered at the hands of a stranger class, which for hundreds of years has lived at our expense, and now endeavours to keep us in subjection—when but a few days previous you are insolently reminded that the superiority of ‘the descendants of our haughty conquerors over the humble posterity of the conquered’ is graciously forgotten for a moment; and one then sees that by means of insolence and trickery they are seeking to perpetuate the same system with us and our descendants; then, if such treatment be not deserved, we are ready to sacrifice all to maintain our rights and humble the pride of those who humiliate us.

“Monnier, calm though indignant, had a truly great idea. After having shown us how strange it was to see the hall of the States-General occupied by armed men, and us, the National Assembly, at its door, exposed to the laughter and insults of the nobles and their servants; forced to take refuge in a tennis-court, that our labours might not be interrupted; he cried—‘The intention to wound us in our dignity had been openly shown, and it warned us of the liveliness of intrigue and of the rage

with which they endeavoured to drive our good king to take disastrous steps ; and in this state of things the nation's representatives had but one course to pursue—to bind themselves to the public safety and the country's interests by a solemn oath.'

"This proposition excited great enthusiasm, every one comprehending that the union of the good causes terror to the bad ; the following resolution was immediately passed :—

" 'The National Assembly, considering that having been invited to determine the constitution of the kingdom, effect the restoration of public order, and maintain true monarchical principles, nothing can prevent the continuance of its deliberations, in whatsoever place it may be forced to establish itself, and that where its members are met, there is the National Assembly :

" 'Resolved, that all members of this Assembly shall at this instant take a solemn oath never to separate, and to meet wherever circumstances may require it, until the constitution of the kingdom is strengthened and established on a solid base ; and the said oath having been taken, that all and each member shall confirm by their signature this irrevocable resolution.'

"How pleased you would have been, Maître Jean, to see this great sombre hall, us in the centre of it, and the people all around ; to hear the hum of astonishment, satisfaction, and enthusiasm ; then the president, Bailly, standing on a chair, reading to us the form of the oath, amidst a religious silence ; then suddenly our hundreds of voices, like a clap of thunder, burst forth in the old building with, ' We swear it !—we swear it !'

"Ah ! our ancestors who have suffered so much ought to move in their graves. I am not a very suscep-

tible man, but I had not a drop of blood in my veins. I never believed such happiness could be in store for me. Near me the curé Jacques was in tears; Gerard de Vic was very pale; at last we fell into the arms of one another.

“Outside, shouts of applause extended over the old town; then it was I recollected this verse of the Gospel, when the soul of Christ ascended to heaven—‘The earth shook and the veil of the temple was rent in twain.’

“When quiet was re-established, each in turn approached the table and took the oath, which the secretaries wrote down and each one signed. I never wrote my name with so much pleasure: I laughed as I signed, and yet I could have cried—what a grand day!

“One deputy only, Martin d’Auch, of Castelnaudary, signed ‘Dissentient.’ Valentine will be happy that he is not the only one of his species in France, and that another son of the people loves the nobles better than his own race—there are two of them!

“The opposition of Martin d’Auch was inscribed on the register. And as some suggested sending a deputation to his majesty to represent our profound grief, &c., the Assembly adjourned to Monday, the 22nd, at the usual hour, resolving that, if the royal sitting took place in the Salle des Menus, all members of the Third Estate would remain there after the sitting to take into consideration their own affairs, which are those of the nation.

“We separated at six.

“When he heard what had taken place, the Count d’Artois, surprised to find that it was possible to carry on deliberations in a tennis-court, sent to engage it for

his own amusement on the 22nd. This time the poor prince thought we should find no refuge anywhere.

“The next day the king sent us word the sitting would not take place on the 22nd, but the 23rd. It was prolonging our anxieties; but these profound geniuses had not taken into consideration that at Versailles there are other localities besides the tennis-court and the Salle des Menus, so that on the 22nd, finding these two places closed, the assembly first betook themselves to the Recollets Chapel, which was not large enough, and then the Church of Saint-Louis, where every one was at his ease.

“The grand plan of M. the Count d’Artois and the princes de Condé and de Conti was thus rendered abortive. One can never think of everything. Who could ever have supposed that we should go to the Church of Saint-Louis, and that the clergy themselves would come and join us there? And yet, Maître Jean, these are the great men who have held us so many ages in abasement! It is easy to see now that our ignorance only has been to blame, and we cannot reproach them for it. Silly Jeannette Paramel, of Baraques, with her great throat, has more wit than they.

“Towards midday M. Bailly announced that he was informed the majority of the clergy was about to visit the Assembly to verify the powers in common. The court had been aware of this since the 19th; it was to prevent this meeting at any hazard that the Salle des Menus had been closed to us, and that preparations had been made for a royal sitting.

“The clergy first congregated in the choir of the church; then it joined us in the nave, and we had again a moving scene; the curés had gained over their

bishops, and the bishops themselves were nearly all rallied to the cause of good sense.

“One ecclesiastic only, the Abbé Maury, the son of a shoemaker of the Comtat-Venaissin, felt his dignity wounded by being confounded among the deputies of the Third Estate. One does see strange things in this world !

“Notwithstanding this abbé, of all his order the greatest opponent of this union, documents were examined, and speeches of mutual congratulations were made ; after which the sitting was adjourned, to be continued the next day, Tuesday, in the usual place of the assemblies, the Salle des Menus.

“We now come to the 23rd, the day of the royal sitting.

“The next morning, on rising and opening the shutters, I saw we were going to have very bad weather ; it did not rain yet, but the sky was overcast. That did not prevent the street being full of people. Some instants later Father Gerard came up to breakfast, followed by the curé Jacques. We were in full dress, as on the day of our first meeting. What did this royal sitting indicate ? what had they to say to us ? Since the evening before we knew that the Swiss and the Gardes-Françaises were under arms ; there was a report that six regiments were marching on Versailles. While at breakfast we heard the patrols up and down the Rue Saint-François. Gerard was afraid something bad was going to happen—a *coup d'état*, as it was called—to compel us to vote the money and then send us home. The curé said it was rather like saying, ‘Your money or your life,’ and that the king, notwithstanding his complaisance to the queen and the Count

d'Artois, was incapable of striking us such a blow as that. I thought as he did. But as for knowing the object of the royal sitting, I was no farther advanced than the others. I thought perhaps they might try to frighten us; however, we were soon to know what we were to expect.

"We set out at nine; all the streets abutting on the hall of assembly were thronged with people already; patrols came and went; people of all sorts, citizens, workmen, and soldiers, seemed uneasy; every one was distrustful.

"The moment we came near the hall it began to rain; a shower was imminent; I was on before, and I hurried. About one hundred deputies were standing before the door at the grand avenue. They were not allowed to enter, while the clergy and the nobility passed without notice; and as I arrived a sort of lacquey came and told the gentlemen of the Third Estate to enter by the Rue du Chantier to avoid obstruction and confusion.

"M. the Marquis de Brezé having had so much trouble in finding places for all in their order the day of the first meeting of the States-General, had, I suppose, adopted this plan on his own responsibility.

"We began to grow angry; but as it rained fast we made haste to reach the door of the Chantier, expecting to find it open. But M. the Marquis de Brezé had not placed the two first orders to his satisfaction; the back door was, therefore, still closed. We had to take refuge under a sort of shed on the left, while the nobles and the bishops entered boldly and majestically by the Grande Avenue de Paris. M. the grand master of the ceremonies did not put himself out of the way for us;

he thought it quite in the order of things to keep us waiting; we were only there for form's sake after all. What are the representatives of the people? What is the Third Estate? Only canaille! Doubtless such was the opinion of the marquis, and if peasants, citizens like myself, had some difficulty in digesting these affronts, revived from day to day by a species of upper-servant, imagine the rage of a noble like Mirabeau; his hair stood on end, his fleshy cheeks trembled with rage. The rain poured down. Twice our president had been turned back; M. the marquis had still to find places for some great personages. Mirabeau, seeing that, said to Bailly in a terrible voice, pointing to the deputies of the Third Estate—

“ ‘Monsieur le président, conduct the nation before the king!’ ”

“At last, for the third time, Bailly went up and knocked at the door, and the marquis condescended to appear, having, no doubt, finished his noble task. That man, Maître Jean, can boast of having served the court well. Our president declared that if the door was not opened, the Third Estate would retire.

“Then it was thrown wide open; we saw the hall adorned as on the first day, the benches of the nobility and the clergy occupied by the splendid deputies of these two orders, and we entered, wet through. Messieurs of the nobility and some of the bishops laughed as we took our places; they seemed quite pleased at our disgrace.

“Those things cost dear.

“We sat down, and almost directly after the king entered from the other end of the hall, surrounded by the princes of the blood, the dukes and peers, the

captains of his guards, and some gardes du corps. Not a single cry of ‘Vive le roi!’ was heard on our side. Silence was instantaneous, and the king said, ‘That he believed he had done everything for the good of his people, and that it seemed to him we had nothing to do but to finish his work, but that for two months we had not been able to agree over our preliminary operations, and that he owed to himself to put a stop to these fatal dissensions. He would consequently declare his pleasure to us.’

“After this speech the king sat down, and a secretary of state read us his wishes.

“Art. 1. ‘The king wills that the ancient distinction of the three orders should be preserved entire, forming three separate chambers. He declares null the deliberations taken by the deputies of the Third Estate on the 17th of this month.’

“Art. 2. ‘His majesty declares the powers valid, verified or not verified, in each chamber, and commands that such declaration be communicated to the other orders without any more hindrance.’

“Art. 3. ‘The king annuls all restrictions which have been imposed on the powers of the deputies.’

“So that every one of us could do as he pleased, grant subsidies, vote taxes, alienate the nation’s rights, &c., and without attention to the wishes of those who sent him.

“Art. 4 and 5. ‘If deputies have taken a rash oath to remain faithful to their mission, the king allowed them to write to their respective bailiwicks to be relieved of such oath; but in the meantime they would retain their places, to give weight to the decisions of the States-General.’

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